

CINEFANTASTIQUE

August

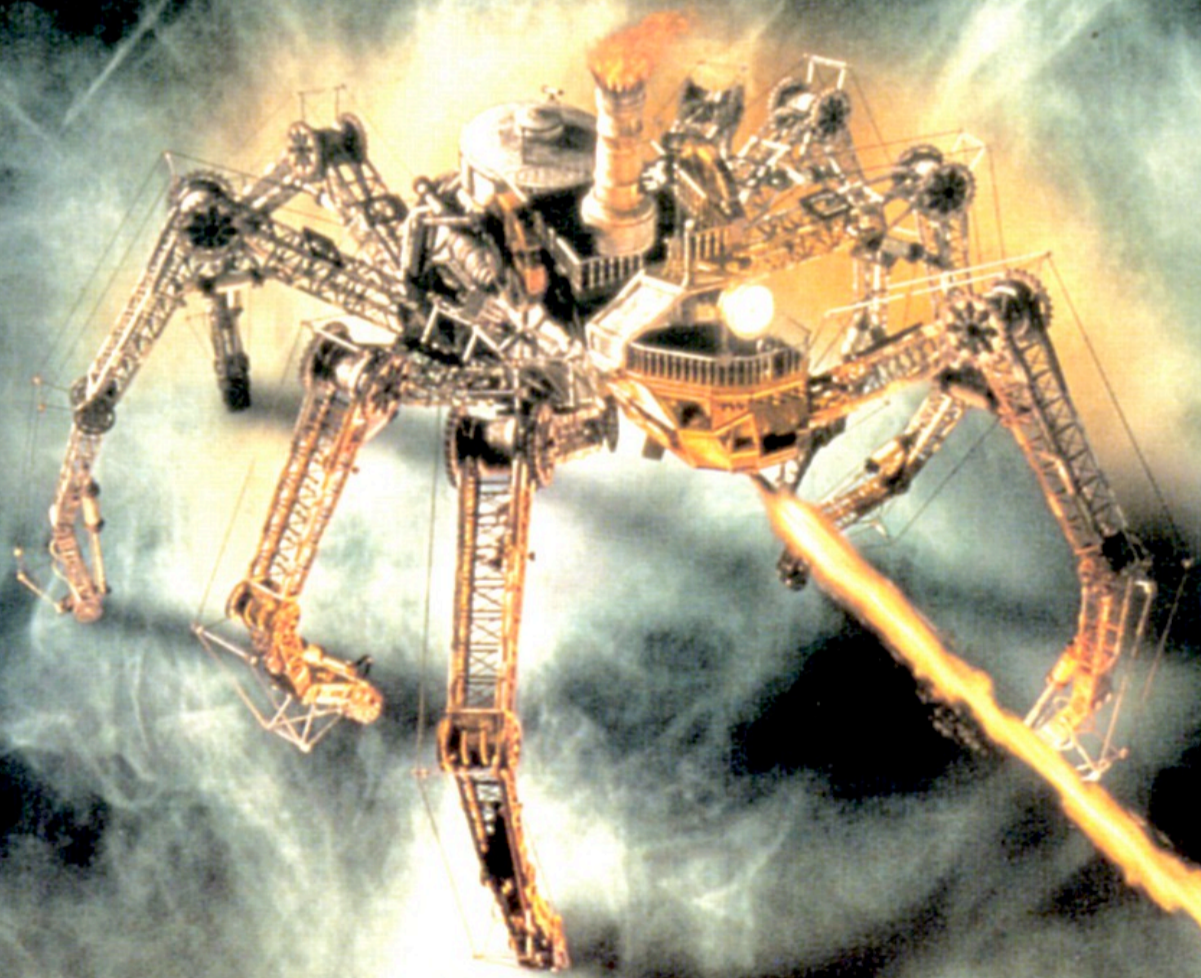
\$5.95

CAN \$9.50

UK £4.30

WILD WILD WEST

THE HAUNTING
BLAIR WITCH PROJECT
AUSTIN POWERS II
B5'S CRUSADE



ANIMATING EDGAR RICE BURROUGH'S "TARZAN"

Volume 31 Number 7



Every story has a hero,

Every hero has a villain,

Every villain has a really cool uniform

and

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CONTENTS

VOLUME 31 NUMBER 7

"The Magazine with a Sense of Wonder"

AUGUST 1999

Welcome to life after STAR WARS. Thankfully there's plenty to see this summer without having to resort to sitting through THE PHANTOM MOVIE one more time. Our review is on page 61, and while our view of the genre often diverges from the mainstream press, in this instance almost no one has been fooled. Which is not to say that EPISODE ONE wasn't worth the price of admission. Its lush and imaginative visual texturing makes for fun viewing, but there's little of substance to intrigue you to make a return visit real soon. Rabid STAR WARS fans came out of the woodwork to give it a boxoffice kick on its opening day, but even the fans seem to have their limits. Like the locust, it will soon be time for them to return to hibernation, until 2002, when the hype for the next installment will revive them like a spring rain. But after EPISODE ONE, it's going to be pretty hard to the rest of us to work ourselves into much of a lather for the next one.

This issue we focus on two other fantasy and science fiction revivals this summer, the return of Edgar Rice Burroughs' TARZAN and '60s TV fave WILD WILD WEST. Burroughs' TARZAN is a classic case of how Hollywood has consistently failed to mine the genre's richness, dumbing-down Burroughs' fantasy hero in a series of film adaptations that rendered him only as an Ape Man cliché. Hopefully Disney's new animated version will right that artistic injustice and give Burroughs' classic novel the respectful, intelligent treatment it deserves. Animation specialist Mike Lyons profiles the creative team who are attempting to give Burroughs his due, and takes a look at Deep Canvas, the technical innovation Disney developed for the film that is poised to revolutionize the look of animation.

WILD WILD WEST is more of a reinvention than a revival of the fondly remembered '60s TV show that wedded Jules Verne and James Bond. Hollywood correspondent Dale Kutzera talks to MEN IN BLACK director Barry Sonnenfeld on mounting the ambitious project, and Craig Reid takes a look at the TV original.

Frederick S. Clarke



Page 8



Page 18



Page 32



Page 48



Page 61

7 13TH WARRIOR

Retelling the monster classic "Beowulf," director John McTiernan and star Antonio Banderas take on tenth-century Vikings. / *Preview by Douglas Eby*

8 THE HAUNTING

Phil Tippett on devising visual effects in the remake of Shirley Jackson's and Robert Wise's classic. / *Article by Douglas Eby*

10 BLAIR WITCH PROJECT

Artisan Entertainment releases the Sundance sensation, a no-budget horror film destined for cult status. / *Article by Patrick Legare*

12 MYSTERY MEN

Universal's effects-laden superhero parody is based on an obscure comic. / *Article by Joe Fordham*

14 DEEP BLUE SEA

Director Renny Harlin on his high-tech killer shark thriller, as medical research meets JAWS. / *Article by Chuck Wagner*

16 IRON GIANT

Brad Bird directs the children's classic by British poet Ted Hughes, with the promise of a pure cinema kick. / *Article by Drew McWeeny*

18 ANIMATING "TARZAN"

Disney's animation realizes Edgar Rice Burroughs' hero as movies never could. / *Articles by Mike Lyons*

32 WILD WILD WEST

The reinvention of the '60s TV show as summer movie eye candy. / *Articles by Frederick C. Szebin*

48 AUSTIN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME

Director Jay Roach on spoofing the Bond formula in the return of Mike Myers' randy superspy. / *Article by Douglas Eby*

50 MUPPETS IN SPACE

Producer Brian Henson on the magic of the Muppets in the high-tech world of movie making. / *Article by William Wilson Goodson Jr.*

52 INSPECTOR GADGET

Music video director David Kellogg on filming the cartoon fantasy live action. / *Article by Mitch Persons*

54 STIGMATA

Rupert Wainwright on directing Tom Lazarus' unique horror script for MGM. / *Article by Dan Scapperotti*

56 BABYLON 5: CRUSADE

The doomed series—the sequel to BABYLON 5—premieres on TNT. / *Article by Frank Garcia*

61 STAR WARS: THE PHANTOM MENACE

Still reeling from the unprecedented build-up of the newest STAR WARS, our intrepid reviewer shares his views.

5 HOLLYWOOD GOTHIC

60 REVIEWS

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CINEFANTASTIQUE (ISSN 0145-6032) is published bi-monthly at 7240 W. Roosevelt Rd., Forest Park, IL 60130. (708) 366-5566. Second class postage paid at Forest Park, IL 60130 & additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to CINEFANTASTIQUE, P.O. Box 270, Oak Park, IL 60303. **Subscriptions:** 6 issues \$26, 12 Issues \$48, 24 issues \$90. (Foreign & Canada: 6 issues \$34, 12 issues \$55, 24 Issues \$100.) Single copies: \$8. **Retail Distribution:** In the U.S. by Eastern News Distributors, 250 W. 55th St., New York, NY 10019. (800) 221-3148.

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ANIMASTERPIECE

PRINCESS MONONOKE (Miramax)

Dubbed for domestic release, Hayao Miyazaki's anime masterpiece finally reaches U.S. screens—well, to be more accurate, screens in New York and Los Angeles. Seems the folks at Miramax don't have the confidence to open the film wide. Oh well, besides minting money with blockbuster franchises like SCREAM, Miramax has proven itself sometimes successful at art house distribution (from SEX, LIES AND VIDEOTAPE to LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL), so we can hope this exclusive debut is just a platform to generate interest before expanding into wider markets. Of course, this means we expect all you readers in N.Y. and L.A. to run out and see the movie opening weekend, thus providing a successful opening to insure a wider expansion. SEE ANIMEFANTASTIQUE 1:3, our cover story preview now on newstands.

October 29 (exclusive)



RELEASE SCHEDULE

Upcoming cinefantastique at a glance, along with a word or two for the discriminating viewer.

compiled by Steve Biodrowski
(unless otherwise noted)

AUSTIN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME (NL)

June 11

Michael Myers returns in this sequel to the sleeper hit. Also returning is Robert Wagner, joined by newcomers Heather Graham and Rob Lowe. SEE PAGE 48.

THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT (Artisan)

July 16

This pseudo-documentary, a hit at Sundance, purports to tell the story of three filmmakers who hiked in the Black Hills Forest of Maryland to make a film about a local legend. The premise is that they never returned, but their footage was found and assembled into this movie. Written, directed, and edited by Eduardo Sanchez and Daniel Myrick. SEE PAGE 10.

DEEP BLUE SEA (WB)

July 30

A May 14 debut was pushed back to August for this film about the pitfalls of genetically engineering sharks to have the intelligence of dolphins, while still retaining their aggressive instincts. Renny Harlin directed Stellan Skarsgard and Samuel Jackson in a script by Duncan Kennedy and John Zinman. SEE PAGE 14.

FREE ENTERPRISE (Lions Gate) June

This comedy about trekkies who meet their idol (William Shatner) opens exclusively in New York and Los Angeles before expanding later in the month. SEE CFQ 31:5

THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE (DreamWorks) July 23

Jan DeBont (TWISTER) directed this remake of Shirley Jackson's novel (previously filmed as THE HAUNTING by Robert Wise). Liam Neeson, Lili Taylor, and Catherine Zeta-Jones star. The screenplay is by David Self. SEE PAGE 8.

INSPECTOR GADGET (Disney) July 23

Matthew Broderick (GODZILLA) plays the title character in this live action version of the kiddie cartoon. Rupert Everett, Joely Fisher and Dabney Colman co-star. SEE PAGE 52.

IRON GIANT (WB)

August 6

Jennifer Aniston and Henry Connick Jr. head the voice cast of this animated film about the machine that falls to Earth and devours all the metal it finds in its path, including mankind's own weapons of destruction. Based upon the children's book by Ted Hughes. SEE PAGE 16.

LAKE PLACID (Fox)

July 16

Bridget Fonda and Bill Pullman in a tale from director Steve Miner about a 35-foot alligator picking off unsuspecting victims in a lake near Maine. David E. Kelley (ALLY MCBEAL) wrote the tongue-in-cheek script.

MUPPETS FROM SPACE

(Columbia/Jim Henson Pictures) July 16

Gonzo discovers that his long-lost relatives are actually aliens from a distant planet. David Arquette, Ray Liotta, and Andie MacDowell lend support to the usual Muppet cast of characters. SEE PAGE 58

THE MUSE (October)

August 20

Albert Brooks co-wrote and directed this comedy, in which he stars as a screenwriter whose writer's block forces him to rely on a modern-day Muse (Sharon Stone) for the inspiration he needs to regain his stature in Hollywood.

MYSTERY MEN (Universal)

August 6

Some not-so-super heroes (Ben Stiller, Paul Ruebens, Janeane Garafolo) confront a mad villain (Geoffrey Rush) in this adaptation of the Dark Horse comic book.

SLEEPY HOLLOW (Para.) November 19

Paramount had planned a July 9 debut for this Tim Burton effort. Instead, the film will open, more appropriately, during the Halloween season.

SOUTH PARK (Paramount)

June 30

Those foul-mouthed kids from the Comedy Central cartoon hit reach theatre screens on the same day as WILD WILD WEST. You've got to admire Paramount's nerve.

STIGMATA (MGM)

August 27

In this thriller with a religious twist, the Vatican dispatches a priest (Gabriel Byrne) to ascertain the validity of a case involving a woman (Patricia Arquette) suffering the wounds of Christ. SEE PAGE 54.

TARZAN (Disney)

June 18

Can Disney's adaptation of Edgar Rice Burroughs' most famous character withstand the competition from Stan, Kyle, Cartman, and Kenny? SEE PAGE 18.

TEACHING MRS. TINGLE (Dimension)

August 20

Kevin Williamson's directorial debut, about a confrontation between high school kids and a terrorizing teacher, underwent a title change (from KILLING MRS. TINGLE) in the wake of the shooting at Columbine High School.

THE 13TH WARRIOR (Touchstone)

August 13

Antonio Banderas, Omar Shariff, and Diane Venora star in this long-delayed saga, directed by John McTiernan. SEE PAGE 7.

WILD WILD WEST (WB)

June 30

Will Smith and Kevin Kline in director Barry Sonnenfeld's update of the '70s TV series. Kenneth Branagh co-stars as the evil Dr. Loveless. SEE PAGE 32.



AN ALAN SMITHEE FILM?

SUPERNOVA (MGM)

Since director Walter Hill left during post-production, this film will apparently bear the D.G.A.'s pseudonym, Alan Smithee. The story follows the crew of the Nightingale 229, who respond to a distress message from a mining installation and find the sole survivor, Troy Larson (Peter Facinelli), and a mysterious alien object, which seems to bring out the best—and worst—in anyone who comes in contact with it. One of these unfortunates is Pensacola, played by Lou Diamond Phillips, who said, "At one point, I'm wrapped around this alien object like it's my lover, and the thought kept occurring to me, 'Boy I look like a schmuck; I'm here hugging a giant bowling pin! They say things will glow and will be coming off of it, that it will have a life of its own. Yeah, right. What if you run out of money? Then I'm stuck holding a lava lamp!'"

Dale Kutzera

December 17



HOLLYWOOD GOTHIC

UNIVERSAL SOLDIER II

Two TV movies haunt the airwaves, but here's a theatrical sequel, anyway.

by Jon Keeyes

For the first time in his 16-year film career, Jean-Claude Van Damme is making a sequel, reprising his role as Luc Deveraux in *UNIVERSAL SOLDIER: THE RETURN*. Produced by Craig Baumgarten and Allen Shapiro, who regained the film rights after Carolco went bankrupt, *UNIVERSAL SOLDIER 2* will take on the summer action heat when Columbia Pictures releases it this September.

Initially, there was some concern that two other *UNIVERSAL SOLDIER* movies have already appeared on The Movie Channel, but producer Craig Baumgarten was quick to explain: "Someone bought the rights to do a *UNIVERSAL SOLDIER* television series, and they messed it up. Instead of doing a TV series, they did these two TV movies. I don't believe they even have the rights any longer. But from our standpoint these movies don't exist. None of the people involved in the first movie, including Jean-Claude, had anything to do with these films."

With this official *UNIVERSAL SOLDIER* sequel, Luc Deveraux has returned to the UNISOL program as a technical advisor. This program, which spawns super-human soldiers, has now become public knowledge and is funded by the government for the military. To avoid the renegade problems in the first film, a super-computer called S.E.T.H. has been built to monitor and control the UNISOL's. But, like any good action flick, S.E.T.H. decides to take over and sets out to destroy anything and anyone that could prevent it from being completely self-sufficient.

To ensure impact of the film, an array of action stars were enlisted to round out the cast. Michael Jai White (*SPAWN*) plays the voice of S.E.T.H. and eventually the body the program inhabits. Wrestling champion Bill Goldberg jumps on board as Romeo, a Universal Soldier and S.E.T.H.'s primary soldier sent to destroy Van Damme. Fe-



Jean Claude Van Damme, star of the original feature film, returns in the sequel.

male body-building champion Kiana Tom was also recruited to aid Van Damme in his fight against the out of control program.

Fans of *UNIVERSAL SOLDIER* may be asking what happened to Veronica, the reporter who became Deveraux's love interest from the first? Explained Baumgarten, "Part of making a sequel is to try and make it surprising at some level, to not replay the first with the same storyline and same characters. So we created the story that Veronica had died in a car crash, and there had been a daughter from that marriage, and Luc becomes a single father trying to raise his daughter."

To replace Veronica, the role of Erin was created. Played by Heidi Schanz (*THE TRUMAN SHOW*, *SEVEN*), the character is a reporter who arrives at the science facility to cover the UNISOL program becoming a mainstream part of the industrial military complex. She also shows up in time for everything to go to hell and inadvertently gets stuck aiding Deveraux. Said Schanz, "Erin is tough but not tough in a hard way. She doesn't take a lot of flak. So when my character and Jean-Claude's character

meet up they butt heads—if you will. But I think it works nicely for the art of the character because they start at one end and they take it completely somewhere else."

Where that somewhere else is would mean giving away a climactic ending to a high-budget, power-packed action flick. In the words of producer Baumgarten, "The whole process of this *UNIVERSAL SOLDIER* is quite different, but I don't want to be specific about it because I want people to come and see the movie." □

FLIGHT 180

by Paula Vitaris

With two new projects filming nearly back-to-back in Vancouver, the writing-producing team of Glen Morgan and James Wong (*THE X-FILES*) are very busy. In March they shot a pilot for Fox, *THE WONDER CABINET*, about a trio of doctors who investigate medical anomalies. Then, on May 17, Wong began directing his first feature film, *FLIGHT 180*, from a script he and Morgan wrote for producers Craig Perry and Warren Zide. The film will be distributed by New Line Cinema. Wong previously directed an episode of *THE X-FILES* and a Fox pilot called *THE NOTORIOUS 7* (not picked up), and he did extensive second unit directing on *SPACE: ABOVE AND BEYOND*.

"*FLIGHT 180* is about a group of high school kids who are going on a trip to France," Morgan said. "One of the kids has a vision that the plane is going to explode; he freaks out, and he and six other kids are removed from the plane. They intend to take another flight, but then the first one explodes. Then we find that Death is angry that seven people got off the plane, and he goes back after the kids."

The original outline, by Jeff Reddick, was more of a stalker story, Morgan noted. "We said, 'Why don't we do it without that and try to be a little like those movies Val Lewton made at RKO?'" Wong added, "It's scarier to deal with psychological suspense, versus the graphic kind of movies we've been seeing lately. Those older movies had the style that was born out of no budget. They couldn't have a

continued on next page

Short Notes

MGM and Sony have settled their lawsuit regarding Sony's alleged right to make a rival James Bond franchise. Sony's claim to the Bond character was always rather dubious, but MGM agreed to pay \$10 million in exchange for Sony's agreement not to proceed; Sony, meanwhile, paid MGM \$6 million in legal fees. ☺ Producer **Scott Rudin** will join forces with **Edgar Scherick** to remake *THE STEPFORD WIVES* at Paramount. Scherick produced the 1974 original, which was based on the novel by Ira Levin about a small town replacing its wives with subservient robotic automatons. ☺ Since 20th Century Fox put the project in turnaround, writer-director **Brian Helgeland** (*PAYBACK*) is trying to set up *SIN EATER* at another studio. **Antonio Banderas** was set to play the lead, an ageless man who devours the sins of others. (The idea was used in a *NIGHT GALLERY* episode in the 1970s, starring Barbara Steele.) ☺ New Line has paid a seven-figure sum to **Jerry Lewis** for remake rights to *CINDERELLA*. □

SPIDERMAN, THE RIDE

Kleiser-Walczak proves eye-popping 3-D effects for Universal's thrill ride.

by Ron Plesset

The Mighty Spider-Man, one of the newest attractions at Universal Studios, Florida blends 3-D movie effects with dark ride, simulator and immersive technologies to beg the question: are movies and rides becoming one?

"I wanted to create a ride that put people into a comic book," recalled ride designer Gary Goddard, a life-long comic book fan who worked closely with James Cameron on *TERMINATOR 2: 3-D*. "Comic books are all about powerful, dynamic action and dark rides use animatronics. On *T-2: 3-D* we surrounded people with 3-D screens so I said, 'Hey, what if we did 3-D and these things could really come at you?' My first mental image was the cover of *Spider-Man #14* with the Green Goblin tossing that pumpkin. I thought, 'Oh my God! We could have the Green Goblin come flying right at you and fling his flaming pumpkin!' Then I thought, 'What if we also do immersive things? If Doc Oc extends his arms in 3-D and sprays green gas on you, we could have real green smoke envelope the car. If Hydra-Man is throwing punches you could feel the globules of water flying off his arms.'" After a year of planning the attraction, Goddard moved on to other projects, however, his basic concept stayed the same.

Scott Trowbridge, who inherited the project, outlined the premise: J.J. Jameson enlists us in his cause to go out and get his biggest



The 3-D finale as spiderman brings the villains to justice, effects by Kleiser Walczak for Universal Studios Escape "Islands of Adventure" ride in Orlando.

story, the disappearance of the Statue of Liberty, which the Sinister Syndicate has kidnapped and are holding for ransom. Jameson, who characteristically blames the deed on Spider-Man, sends us out into the New York night in his new prototypical news-gathering vehicles [ride vehicles with motion bases] and night vision goggles [3-D glasses]. We meet up with Spider-Man, who says, 'You guys are crazy for being out here tonight. This is even dangerous for me. Try and lay low and let me take care of it.' Of course we end up getting in the middle of it and Spider-Man saves our bacon."

The daunting task of creating 3-D-CGI in such an unorthodox medi-

um fell to Kleiser-Walczak (*FLIGHT OF THE NAVIGATOR*). "We've been working on it for two and-a-half years," said Jeffrey Kleiser, "and have developed new technologies that will enable us to make 3-D images that can be seen from a moving point of view. Not only are you going past the screens but you are getting closer to them and further away. Two of the shots are projected onto hemispherical domes so no matter where you look there's stereo images as far as the eye can see. In those scenes you're flying over New York City. It's an immense sense of space."

Kleiser-Walczak worked closely with Universal's physical effects team to create a seamless transition between the real and virtual worlds. Noted Trowbridge, "We developed a method to render the scenery using the same tools, techniques and artists that were developing the on-screen imagery. The blend between the different mediums is imperceptible."

The Mighty Spider-Man may not have a kitchen sink in it, but it has practically everything else, including synthetic odors. "There have been lots of attempts at using Smell-O-Vision and similar processes and it's problematic," explained Trowbridge. "People's sense of smell is much more subjective than you might think. What smells like something to one person, won't smell the same to

Production Starts



AMERICAN PSYCHO

The notorious novel of graphically detailed horror finally goes into production as a low-budget effort from Edward M. Pressman Productions. With Hollywood hotshots Leonardo DiCaprio and Oliver Stone out of the picture, Mary Harron directs Christian Bale in the title role, working from a screenplay she co-wrote with Guinevere Turner. The supporting cast includes Jared Leto, Willem Dafoe, and Reese Witherspoon.

THE BICENTENNIAL MAN

Robin Williams stars as Andrew the android in this romantic drama from director Chris Columbus. The screenplay, which follows Andrew's 200-year quest to become human, was written by Nicholas Kazan, from the short story by Isaac Asimov. Embeth Davidtz, Sam Neill, and Oliver Platt costar.

SCREAM IF YOU KNOW WHAT I DID LAST HALLOWEEN

The company that brought you *SCREAM 1* and *2* now offers this spoof of derivative, self-reflexive teen horror-comedies. Marlon and Shawn Wayans star for their brother, director Keenan Ivory Wayans. The trio contributed to the script, which also passed through the hands of Jason Freidberg, Aaron Seltzer, Phil Beauman, and Buddy Johnson. Apparently, Dimension isn't worried that this film will hurt the *SCREAM* franchise, since they started production on *SCREAM 3* two months later.

the other person, especially with synthetic smells."

As opening day drew near in the spring of 1998, the principals behind it were highly-enthusiastic. "T-2: 3-D certainly was the big leap forward in '96," said Goddard, "and I think The Mighty Spider-Man is the next big leap forward."

"The concept that we came up with for the X-Men attraction is about as close as we're ever going to get to *STAR TREK*'s holo-deck. It's pretty cool. Hopefully that will be in Phase II of Islands of Adventure [at Universal Studios, Florida]." Jeffrey Kleiser, meanwhile, is working on yet another project that will set new standards for immersive experiences. "We're just getting started on a new attraction which pushes the doors that we've opened on Spider-Man even further." □

FLIGHT 180

continued from previous page/ monster, because they didn't have the money. That's not the case here; it's a choice we made."

Heading the cast is Devon Sawa (*IDLE HANDS*) as Alex Browning, the boy with the vision. Alex is one of several characters named in honor of famous horror movie directors, in his case Tod Browning (*DRACULA*). Female lead is Ali Larter (*THE HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL*) as a girl with the poetic name of Clear Rivers. Wong said, "Devon's a great actor, and he comes off more as an Everyman, or Everyboy. We wanted someone that people could relate to, versus a kid you can't imagine ever having a pimple. Devon looks great, of course, but he's also accessible and he has a great vulnerability that is really helpful to the character."

The cinematographer is Robert McLachlen, making his feature film debut after three years on Fox's *MILLENNIUM*. Jim Coblentz, who worked with Morgan and Wong on *SPACE: ABOVE AND BEYOND*, will edit. Production designer is John Willett (*HALLOWEEN H20*). □

MICHAEL CRICHTON'S 13TH WARRIOR

Retelling the monster classic "Beowulf."

By Douglas Eby

Reportedly developed from an actual tenth century manuscript, as well as the story of Beowulf, the novel *Eaters of the Dead* by Michael Crichton was the basis for THIRTEENTH WARRIOR, shot last year, but not due for release by Touchstone until August 13. A synopsis of Crichton's book indicates the story is about a "representative of the ruler of Baghdad, Ahmad Ibn Fadlan who accompanies a party of Vikings to the barbaric north, where he witnesses wanton sexuality and cold-blooded human sacrifices."

Directed by John McTiernan, the movie is the second one based on the epic Norse po-



Antonio Banderas (inset) plays an Arab courtier recruited to join a band of Vikings (above) to protect their king from a deadly threat. Directed by John McTiernan in 1998, the long-delayed film opens August 13.

em, along with BEOWULF from Dimension Pictures (announced in Hollywood Gothic, December). Set in 922 A.D., THIRTEENTH WARRIOR is about an Arab courtier (Antonio Banderas) being recruited to join a group of Viking warriors who are trading in Morocco, when they find they need to go back to Norway to protect the king from a deadly threat. The film was one of the last to be put into production by Andy Vajna's Cinergi company, according to a story in *Variety*. Following the dissolution of Cinergi, Disney's Touchstone division took over production and worldwide distribution. The historical horror thriller has a

reported budget of more than \$60 million, and co-stars Diane Venora, Omar Sharif, Maria Bonnevie and Vladimir Kulich as the leader of the Vikings. Kulich noted his character name is Bulvi, to be recognizably close to the title of the poem, and that it is historically correct that Vikings traveled to Morocco to trade. "While we are there, we hear there is trouble back in our homeland of Norway, and are told by a woman shaman that we need to form a special group of 13 to return and battle some mysterious figures," he said. "Once we've selected the group from among ourselves, the shaman said the 13th man must be a non-Viking."

So they choose the character played by Banderas, and Kulich noted he wasn't exactly kidnapped by the Vikings, but implied he may not be joining them altogether voluntarily.

The group then returns to Norway, to the village of Rothgar, an old Viking king, because, Kulich noted, "His village is under attack from these mysterious beings. We're never quite sure, at the beginning, if they

are human or not. When we're first attacked by them it is at night, and we can't really make out who they are or what they are. They return to attack us again, and decimate a number of our warriors, and we realize we can't succeed in a battle with them without some assistance. So we again find the woman shaman."

Before starting this project with such a notably action-oriented director, Kulich had some doubts about not being able to develop his role, "but that turned out not to be true," he said. "We spent a month in Canada rehearsing for the film, before shooting. It was a luxury to be able to rehearse that long. That was due to John McTiernan and his interest in developing the characters of the film. He was very concerned about giving time to actors, and providing space before an action sequence, and after, so the characters could be well developed."

Kulich said he thinks the story of Beowulf, which he'd read before, is a powerful one, in which the hero "comes to appreciate the forces of darkness." □

THE HAUNTING

Phil Tippett on devising visual effects for helmer Jan DeBont.

By Douglas Eby

“It was very important to Jan to create a character of the house, to have the spirit of Hugh Crane manifest itself in different forms throughout the picture,” noted visual effects supervisor Phil Tippett about working with director Jan DeBont on filming *THE HAUNTING*. Dreamworks opens DeBont’s remake of Shirley Jackson’s horror classic *The Haunting of Hill House* nationwide on July 23. DeBont follows in the footsteps of Robert Wise, who originally filmed the book in 1969, setting the standard for cinematic ghost stories. Tippett noted the architectural style of the film is “weird” like Hearst Castle at San Simeon. His work as visual effects supervisor is “driven by the screenplay,” he said. “Our job is to work with the director to interpret the screenplay. And at a certain point, there are ideas that are written, that live as literary ideas and don’t translate that well to pictures, so the trick is to figure out what the spirit or the tone of the thing is, and find the pictures that will work best. For this show, more than any other that I’ve been involved with, there’s a great deal more inter-departmental coordination that goes on. For *JURASSIC PARK* or the *STARSHIP TROOPER*’s bugs, you pretty much have a bunch of characters that are doing specific things, that are standing alone,



Liam Neeson, Owen Wilson and Catherine Zeta-Jones star in DeBont’s adaptation of Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House*.

and your focus is on the continuity and the choreography. But here, because the house is a character, we are one aspect of that: the movement and manifestation side of that, but it plugs in very closely to Eugenio Zanetti’s production design, and with the lighting design, and, of course, with Jan.”

The special effects supervisor on the film is John Frazier, and Tippett noted, “There’s a tremendous amount of interaction between us and Frazier’s group. So right from the start, there’s been much more overlap with other departments.”

“The way films are being made these days, they are gradually eliminating all of the time

that you need to do your work, and it’s most disastrous for visual effects in the preproduction stage, because you don’t have time to do all your planning, and if you don’t plan it, it can easily derail. What we did going in was to assess what happens in the screenplay and stick to that.”

An example of CG effects that Tippett and his group are involved with is having the deceased head of the house come to life: “different physical manifestations of Crane,” he said. “It’s not so much shocking stuff, it’s more creepy and ghostly. It reminds me more of Cocteau, where someone is walking down a hall and a statue will turn its eyes to watch them.”

Referring to the 1963 film of the story, Tippett noted, “Everyone remembers the original being cool because it didn’t have any [effects] stuff in it. The trick in a picture like this, which in a big summer picture is balancing that with what makes things creepy or ghostly, and that’s primarily a psychological attribute of every individual, so it’s a very difficult thing to talk about. Everybody has a different idea of what a scary thing is, and generally, in pictorial or art historical terms, it’s things that are pretty vague, and exist on the limits of perception. So it’s that balance, phantasmagorical images, but trying to keep them understated to the degree so you

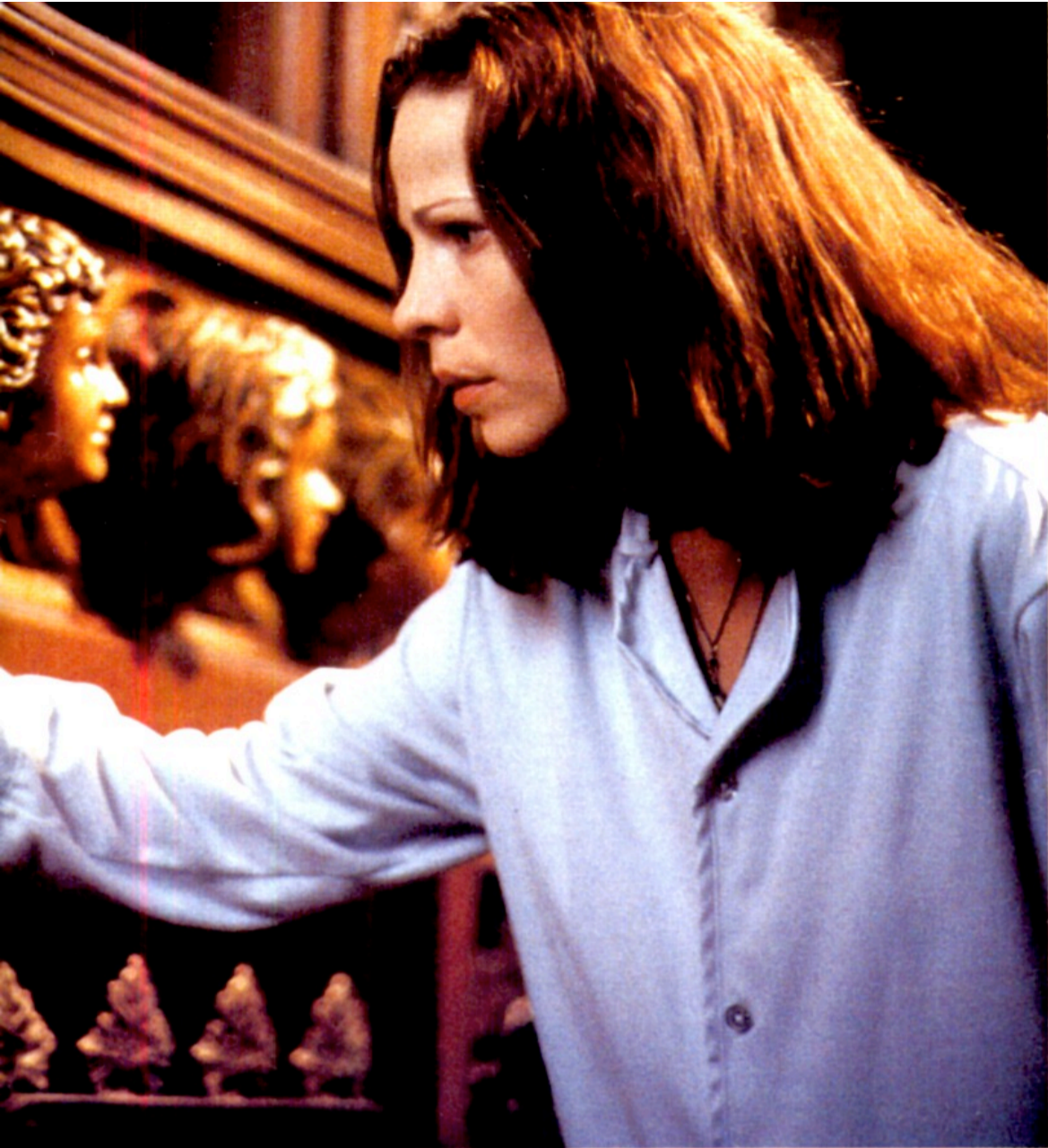


Lili Taylor plays the haunted Nell, Neeson’s psychiatric patient.

can’t tell what they are.” Tippett confirmed that some of the architectural details or elements like statues do come to life, especially during the third act finale “when the house goes crazy.”

“One of the misnomers of the whole digital age is that everything can be done cheaper and faster, and that is not the case,” said Tippett. “Every year, the bar is lifted another 140%, and what’s requested of us is to do things that we’ve never done before (which has certainly been the case in this picture), and it ain’t cheap. So I think a tactic of those who have to dole out the money is just to keep it on as tight a schedule as possible.”

For this particular film, the size of Tippett’s crew is about 150. He said the “way my studio works best, the most efficiently, is to take all of the digital processes that we are currently aware of, and try to fold those processes into a look. A production schedule such as this would not allow for a piece of key art to be developed, and say ‘Make all your technology match this’ because then there’s a tremendous amount of retro-engineering that you’re doing to match something. So what



Tippett and physical effects supervisor John Frazier team-up to make DeBont's haunted house come to life, as figures carved in woodwork speak to Taylor.

we're doing is taking the basic ideas, and using Eugenio's [Zanetti] production design and Walter's lighting as a springboard, and from there creating the effects. So all of this design work is being done at my studio by my partner Craig Hayes."

On *THE HAUNTING* one of the main challenges for Tippett has been trying to create effects that were strong, but not overly so: "They want to have their cake and eat it, too. We need to see amazing, phantasmagorical things, but not too much. They want something hot and cold at the same time. That's really a trick. And also there's the schedule; the release date is just a killer. So a tremendous amount of what you're doing is taking all the experience you've gained throughout your life. I liken it to playing the piano: at a certain point, you're just improvising, making it up as you go along with your best guess." On the other hand, Tippett said that the careful preplanning and design for effects work he's done over the years has meant that usually he hasn't had to scrap scenes, even when running out of time.

Speaking of a particular

scene being shot on the set, Tippett noted that it had originally been planned with computer graphics to show "all this stuff spewing out of a fireplace. In the last few days before shooting it, Jan decided he didn't want to make such an extended moment out of it, that he had enough of those in the picture already, and he just wanted more of a shock.

"And as we had accumulated more shots, and the budget was being driven up by those, this was a good place to cut our work, and do the shot practically. So I didn't have to do anything with it anymore, but all of a sudden John Frazier and

The house traps Taylor in her bed. DeBont plans to keep the effects low-key and suggestive like Robert Wise's revered 1963 version. His film opens nationwide July 23.



PHIL TIPPETT

"One of the misnomers of the digital age is that everything can be done cheaper and faster. Every year the bar is lifted to do things we've never done before...and it ain't cheap."

his crew had to do something they hadn't planned on." But the prop bones used in this scene had already been made, Tippett noted, to be used as dressing.

This film has presented a different kind of challenge for his company than many of his past films, because it requires a "lot of weird things that have to happen," Tippett noted, "and as a consequence, common objects that we're very familiar with need to become altered or do something different. As opposed to creating a dinosaur or a bug, if you have a lampshade or a candle that has to do something very specific, everybody is a critic on what a lampshade or a candle looks like, but not a dinosaur or a giant bug, so it really makes matching those elements, and doing something in the context of reality, much more difficult."

In response to a question about whether new software was needed for the filming, Tippett replied, "Technology is bullshit. It's really story, script, choreography, action. The computer is a different tool, that doesn't tie you to the material world; that's really the only way I look at it. More emphasis should be put on the thought processes, the picture-making processes, that you use in any

application, whether it's computer graphics, or a photograph.

"Programs are written like tools, like lathe bits, or a special kind of drill, or something that helps process images faster. Those are the ways that programming really helps us. But the programs don't make the shot; designers and artists and dramatists, scripters and directors, they make the shot."

This film has about 120 visual effects that Tippett has charge of, and he noted, "for the complex nature of the shots, and the time we have to do them, it's very scary. I'm scared. It's really a horror show for me." His company is now a "fully digital operation," he noted. "For the things we're required to do here, there's really no photographic way of doing it." While his partner, Hayes, is at the studio involved with design work, Tippett is on the set, "kind of managing, making sure that what we had planned months before, and bid and budgeted, is tracked, and make sure what changes occur, we can fold into our process. If there's going to be a disaster, hopefully I can see it coming. So that's where my strength is, in collaborating with the director. Once you see the cut for a scene, you can usually tell immediately if it works, or if it will play without the visual effects."

Tippett noted that DeBont has drawn from a wide range of influences. "Jan is very art historically aware, so most of our references have not come from cinema. A little from Cocteau, an image or two from *THE EXORCIST*, but most of the discussions have been around painters like Francis Bacon or Rene Magritte, evoking a particular feeling or mood. Everything comes off being more like a hallucination, a twisted vision which is psychologically unsettling." □

THE BLAIR W

Artisan debuts the Sundance sensation, a

by Patrick Legare

The annual onslaught of effects-filled "tentpole" pictures are here for the summer of 1999. There's an updating of the 1960's series, *WILD WILD WEST* and a certain *PHANTOM MENACE* that promises to destroy boxoffice records everywhere. On the other end of the spectrum, beyond all the groundbreaking digital effects and hot, young Gen-X casts, is a little horror movie that will chill you to the bone, and has cult



Heather Donahue and Joshua Leonard (l) shoot a harrowing journey through the Black Hills Forest, horror done *cinema verite*.



status written all over it if its headline-making appearance at the Sundance Film Festival this past January is any indication.

Taking a completely original approach to horror, *THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT* is a pseudo-documentary that is unrelenting in its realism. It eschews gore and effects for unrefined psychological terror. Best of all, it gives its audience credit for having a brain by leaving some things unexplained.

BLAIR WITCH, an approximately \$15,000 production shot on High 8 video and 16mm black and white, was bought for between \$1 and \$1.5 million at Sundance by Artisan Entertainment (formerly Live Entertainment.) It is slated for a tiered release beginning in 12 to 15 cities (NY, LA, Washington, Orlando as of this writing) on July 16, followed by expansions into more markets on July 30 and August 6.

The movie opens with a title card that reveals that three young filmmakers Heather Donahue, Michael Williams and Joshua Leonard (the actors' real names) arrived in

Burkittsville, Maryland (formerly Blair Village) to begin filming a documentary on the legend of the Blair Witch. Armed with local lore about the strange case (disappearances, deaths, etc.), the trio entered the purportedly haunted Black Hills Forest to film locations that have allowed the legend to prevail. They were never seen again. About one year later, their camera equipment was found inside an old house in the woods. It is this footage that actually makes up the entire film.

In the pitch darkness, sounds of footsteps crackling over twigs seem to surround them. As their days turn into increasing bouts of conflict and frustration, their nights become pure audio terror: the crackling footsteps, children laughing, hideous shrieks. Little piles of rocks and twigs appear outside their tent and they find strange twig figures hanging from trees. In the film's final third, wrenching horrors bring them to the point of desperation to escape the unseen horrors.

THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT was made by a small Orlando, Florida-based film company called Haxan Films. The company consists of producers Robin Cowie, Gregg Hale and Michael Monello, as well as *BLAIR*'s writer-directors Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez.

The cast, led by Donahue, Williams and Leonard, were subjected to one of the most intriguing styles of guerrilla moviemaking in recent history. "It took us over a year to cast," said Myrick. "Ed [Sanchez] and I had to look through thousands of people, focusing on improv skills...we wanted to see how

they would think on their feet knowing that we had this whole improv method filmmaking approach for the film."

When filming began in October of 1997, the three leads were handed equipment (camping gear, supplies, a High 8 video camera and a 16mm black-and-white film camera), taught how to use the cameras and sent off into Seneca Creek State Park in Maryland for an eight-day shoot.

Though Myrick and Sanchez had written a scene-by-scene outline for the movie, the three actors were left alone to improvise their dialogue, giving the film a much scarier sense of realism. Sanchez explained, "We

didn't want to come in contact with the actors...so we'd direct them to these little directing notes that we'd leave at certain places." To prevent them from getting lost, the actors were also equipped with GPS units, which led them to different wait points, where more acting notes were provided.

After the arduous shoot, Myrick and Sanchez pared more than 18 hours of footage into "a viewable two-and-a-half hours," Myrick said.

"We screened that and got feedback from people about what was working and what was convincing and what wasn't, also to determine whether or not it was scary." As of this writing, the pair were still cutting and pasting the film while also trying to "reduce some of the shakiness in the shots," according to Myrick.

At one point, the film was being considered as a documentary within a documentary and a second round of shooting occurred, which is detailed on their website (www.haxan.com) and called "Phase II."

Sanchez explained, "The original cut of the film was going to be a documentary about the footage that the filmmakers shot. It was kind of an analysis on the footage. We shot the Phase II stuff, but it just didn't work."

When the Phase II film was combined with what the actors had shot (a.k.a. "Phase I"), the directors realized it actually took away from the chilling Phase I footage.

"Some of the Phase II stuff that we shot worked really well in and of itself," said Myrick. "There was some really cool stuff

ITCH PROJECT

no-budget horror destined for cult status.

like archival footage, fake newscasts...that just didn't work in the finished film, but, by itself, is a really cool back story."

Big fans of the film should be happy to know that some of the excess footage (the cool stuff) from both Phase I and Phase II is being saved for the DVD and some stills can be seen on the website (www.blairwitch.com).

When all is said and cut, the film should run at a lean and harrowing 83 minutes. According to Myrick, "the script kind of came out of the editing process. We treated it as much as we could like an actual documentary. We had this huge amount of raw footage that [we] had to sort through and try to pull a narrative out of it and we had to work the dynamic between the characters. At first, there was just too much yelling and we cut that down in the beginning so we'd have something to build to. It took us several months to whittle this thing down to the 83 minutes that we have now. There's a lot of really, really great moments that didn't make the finished cut, it just didn't contribute to the narrative."

Interestingly, one of the most debatable areas of the film is its chilling ending, which the filmmakers have left open to interpretation. Myrick explained, "The final version of the film will help answer a few of those questions, it's less ambiguous. When we reveal what really happens at the end, we don't say, 'OK, this is what happens at the end.' It's just kind of said by somebody and you make the connection."

The ending also sparked some debate with Artisan suits, who approached the filmmakers on the subject.

"It was kind of a debate," Sanchez revealed. "Not a big debate, but they asked us to reshoot some stuff for the end, just different endings and we just kind of stuck with the original ending...the film did not need a big special-effects ending."

Despite this attempt at creative input by the Hollywood heavies, the directors did not appear offended and actually understood the company's thought process.

"Word of mouth is really going to drive this," said Sanchez. "We were talking about how it would be cool to have the sequel be a completely different film."



Florida's shoestring auteurs, co-writers and co-directors Dan Myrick (l) and Eduardo Sanchez (r) with producers Robin Cowie, Greg Hale and Mike Monello.

"Artisan has their agenda to make money on the film," Myrick said. "This film walks that line between commercial marketability and critical appeal to a limited niche market...we're all still not quite sure where the thing's going to ultimately fall into."

Another scene in the film that raises some questions is its sole special effects scene: Heather's unwrapping of a twig bundle which has appeared outside their tent. Inside the package is a bloody chunk of grue that appear to be...fingers? "They were teeth," confirmed Sanchez. "We got spleen the other day...We wanted people to figure it out."

Myrick joined in, "We got tongue, spleen, ear...but they were teeth."

Perusing the website, the details really whet the appetite for more on this film. The directors have provided a chronological timeline of the legend of the Blair Witch, strange deaths and disappearances that occurred every 50 or 60 years. Like the film itself, they give it an air of realism. In fact,

the directors invented the entire thing themselves based on what would appear to be an "In Search Of..." obsession.

"[We] have always been freaked out by the Bigfoot documentaries and the Loch Ness Monster and Bermuda Triangle, UFOs, all that stuff," stated Sanchez. "We kind of decided, 'Let's come up with something freaky that happened in these woods.' The Salem witch trials everybody knows about and we just made these things up...it was creepy!"

With the film's release so close, they have been working closely with Artisan to perfect the final version. Screenings have been ongoing all spring to determine exactly how it should be marketed and released. At Sundance, Haxan sold Artisan worldwide rights to the film and also signed a first-look production deal, which guarantees them sequel rights.

"Word of mouth is really going to drive this," said Sanchez, who is hopeful the film will be seen in at least a few hundred theaters. Though neither direc-

tor would discuss a sequel in detail, they revealed it was something they had already discussed. Sanchez admitted, "We were talking about how it would be cool to have the sequel be a completely different film."

Added Myrick, "The cool thing about BLAIR is that it's just so rich with mythology that we've just got so many opportunities here and various different approaches."

Before the sequels arrive, though, the first film's got to be a hit. Asked whether he'd rather see BLAIR make \$100 million or attain cult status *a la* CARNIVAL OF SOULS, Sanchez laughed, "I'd like it to do both in a perfect world."

He acknowledged, however, that it's more likely a great small horror flick with definite cult potential. "Dan and I have talked about the fact that this film could be playing midnight screenings for ten years."

Said Myrick, "It's a good Halloween film or a college film that you know when you get stoned and go, 'Let's go watch THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT!'" □

THE MYSTERY MEN!

Universal's effects-laden superhero parody is based on an obscure comic.

by Joe Fordham

Scan the magazine racks of your local newsstand and you'll be hard pressed to find Bob Burden's "Mystery Men" anywhere therein. Dig deeper at your resident comic collector's store and you might be more lucky, if they stock back issues of Burden's bizarre *Flaming Carrot Comics*, first published under Burden's indie Kilian Barracks label in 1981, now part of the eclectic cadre at Dark Horse Comics. Seek out *Flaming Carrot* #16/17 and you'll have hit the motherlode, the first appearance of the Mystery Men, the shambolic troupe of superheroes with no superpowers.

August 6, 1999, sees the release of Universal Pictures' big-budget, live-action adaptation of Burden's unique take on the superhero mythos. Fifteen stars including Ben Stiller, Hank Azaria, William H. Macy, Paul Reubens, Janeane Garofolo, Claire Forlani, Tom Waits, Greg Kinnear, Geoffrey Rush and Lena Olin will be duking it out amongst the ragtag comic book combatants. Kinka Usher, veteran of Nissan's surreal "Enjoy the Ride" commercials and the National Milk Board's wacky "Got Milk" spots, takes up his first big-time feature directorial reins.

Usher, one of the advertising world's most highly regarded directing talents, explained the material's appeal, noting that the comics are "very, very different from the Mystery Men we portray on the screen. The thing I really enjoyed about making this movie was that I had freedom to create the heroes that I chose. I wasn't locked into any predisposed idea of who the characters had to be because they were in a hugely popular comic book. It was one reason that drew me to the project. It gave me total freedom to create my own world. I never re-



Wannabe heroes with dubious powers, The Blue Raja (Hank Azaria), The Shoveler (William H. Macy) and Mr. Furious (Ben Stiller).

ally read comic books at all, so I didn't really know much about them. I was more drawn to the idea of a story that was original and an idea that was fresh. This story was the antithesis of a Superman or a Batman. The Mystery Men were superheroes on the other side of the tracks and I thought that had really brilliant potential."

The director's unconventional approach proved to be in keeping with the maverick spirit of the source material at its Dark Horse home. "Bob Burden, who created *Mystery Men*, is much loved around here, the eccentric that he is," stated producer Scott Faye, spokesman for Dark Horse Entertainment, the film production wing of Michael Richardson's indie comic outfit. "He's somewhat of a creative genius." Grown from humble origins in the eighties, Dark Horse now has the third largest comic

circulation in the world, second only to Marvel and D.C. After *THE MASK*, *DOCTOR GIGGLES* and *VIRUS*, *MYSTERY MEN* marks their fifth feature, co-produced with Lawrence Gordon and Lloyd Levin.

Burden entered the Dark Horse fold in 1989 when his self-published *Flaming Carrot Comics* was enjoying the peak of its success, just a couple of issues after "Mystery Men" first appeared. "Back then I was operating as an independent comic producer, packaging everything and giving it to them," Burden recalled. "I had a free range, kind of like Colonel Kurtz going off with 400 Indian tribesmen." The heart of Burden's darkness lay in *Flaming Carrot*, a character deliberately created as the most ridiculous, surreal superhero to emerge from the early eighties' direct-to-market comic boom.

"I wanted to see if I could make the story itself be the star of my series. I didn't want my stories predicated by the super power factor or the theme of

the character's origin or costume," Burden explained. "It was an evolution from the standard comic formula, like Cortez burning the ships he came to South America on so his men wouldn't be thinking about going home. They had to fight or die, and so did the *Flaming Carrot*. I took the dumbest character idea I had come up with at the time and just ran with it. Beyond dumb and downright preposterous, *Flaming Carrot* had a surreal quality. He was a superhero so far removed from the Marvel and D.C. mold, no one ever even asked what his powers were."

While this paid off in forcing Burden to write better stories, pushed the collectors' market price for an original *Flaming Carrot* #1 to \$75 and spawned a Carrot website at flamingcarrot.com, the down side was that for many years the Carrot was too far out there to translate into other media. This led,



Macy, Stiller, and Azaria with their fellow Mystery Men: The Bowler (Janeane Garofalo), The Spleen (Paul Reubens) and The Invisible Boy (Kel Mitchell), fighting the villains threatening to take over Champion City.

“I wanted to make an ensemble movie, as opposed to just another Schwarzenegger action-hero movie.”

—Kinka Usher, director—

in 1988, to the creation of the Mystery Men, a no-less surreal but more marketable proposition. “I had interest from Hollywood in the Carrot but it never seemed to get off the ground,” related Burden. “The Mystery Men hit the home run that won the game.”

Faye acknowledged the spirit of Flaming Carrot remained entrenched in “Mystery Men,” and was eager to praise the movie adaptation for capturing its source material’s loopy, edgy intent. “Neil Cuthbert, who wrote the screenplay with Brent Forrester, just did a phenomenal job of expanding this world,” said Faye. “The movie is weird and wacky, yet it’s extremely entertaining, and obviously with our cast extremely well acted. There are visual effects, but they are definitely secondary to the plot and the characters. It’s really not a film which overtly relies on visual effects to tell the story. It really is a character-driven piece.”

As might be expected of the feature film debut of such a visually distinctive commercials director, the final MYSTERY MEN film will contain over 300 visual effects shots, cutting edge digital trickery being generated by effects studios including Pacific Ocean Post and Rhythm and Hues. The majority of these post-production tasks centered around depicting the Mystery Men’s home town of Champion City, as well as a few otherwise impossible-to-achieve-superhero feats—but the distinction is superhero, not superhuman. The only flying objects here are sharp and metal and pointy, as thrown by The Blue Raja, Master of Silverware, a crime-fighter who lives in fear of his mother finding out the secret of her constantly disappearing kitchen cutlery.

“What distinguishes this from other superhero films is the fact that these are superheroes with families, with issues, with

problems,” Usher explained. “These are superheroes that have relationships with each other. These are superheroes that are incredibly sincere about their pursuits. They take it very seriously, so there’s no joke here. It’s the situation that’s funny.”

Paralleling Burden’s original aim for comic book characters with depth, Usher’s thoughtful approach helped the movie MYSTERY MEN evolve to attract their stellar cast. “When I got involved with the picture it was medium- to low-budget with no cast, just me and the producers,” Usher recalled. “I just sat down with each cast member and explained my vision. I rallied them around the idea that I was going to make a film that was going to be very unique, that wasn’t slapsticky or stupid, but was very sincere, with a tremendous amount of humanity and heart, with really diverse and interesting characters. There were 13 different characters so there was a great opportunity to create a wonderful film. I also didn’t want to make my first film with a single star. I wanted to make an ensemble movie, as opposed to just another Schwarzenegger action-hero movie. I wanted the movie to reflect me. The movie itself is the star.”

Stiller as “Mr. Furious,” the brooding leader of the pack, was always the Mystery Man closest to Burden’s heart, perhaps because he most obviously carried the Carrot’s loner torch, albeit not implanted in a giant, orange noggin. “I was lobbying for Ben from day one,” said Burden. “He was even going to direct the movie at one point before SOMETHING ABOUT MARY came along.” Macy, as the hapless “Shoveller,” brought his character to life beyond all Burden’s expectations. “It was a brilliant role,” Burden exclaimed. “I loved him in FARGO,

but this may rival that.” Paul Reuben also made “The Spleen” his own. “They took the name and some of the powers that he had and kind of ran with it, which is exactly what they should have done,” Burden commented. “I felt sorry for Paul because he had zits all over his face and a really bad haircut, but he really captured the role.” New characters include Kal Mitchell as “Invisible Boy”—“He’s invisible when nobody’s looking at him,” Burden explained—who entered the team as a post-script addition, based on an off-hand Burden quip. Hank Azaria’s “Blue Raja” and Geoffrey Rush’s “Casanova Frankenstein” were both drawn from the original comic bible.

“I’d say, on this particular project, lightning was caught in a bottle,” Faye observed. Burden was equally enthused, “I did this quirky comic, this blue collar superhero that became a cult hit, and now it’s transformed and grown into this big Hollywood movie—and I’m happy with it! That’s the most unusual thing. That’s a story unto itself.” □

Bob Burden’s comic inspiration. Universal opens their big-budget adaptation nationwide August 6, directed by commercials auteur Kinka Usher.



DEEP BLUE SEA

Director Renny Harlin on his high-tech killer

By Chuck Wagner

Scientifically altered sharks attack in Renny Harlin's new film *DEEP BLUE SEA*, which Warner Bros. opens nationwide July 30. Like a kid making mischief, the director gets shots from deep down in massive, indoor Tank #2 at the Baja Studios in Mexico, where *TITANIC* was filmed. A massive shark reacts angrily to the scientists working on it in a large, aquatic lab.

"They're bringing back this shark for examination," Harlin explained. "They are taking the protein complex from its brain. The scientific finding they have come up with is that sharks—which are pretty much the oldest

creatures on earth, having been around for 450 million years, way before the dinosaurs—don't get any illnesses. They don't get cancer. They never sleep. They never stop moving. They have no predators."

In real life, as in the film, sharks may hold the key to a variety of illness cures, including Alzheimer's disease. But in the film, the assumption is that the shark chemicals do help, and a sea base called Aquatica has been created to further the study and harvest of shark brain chemicals.

"In the movie," said Harlin, "they're using the protein complex from the shark's brain to rejuvenate human brain cells." But in the film the experiment goes horribly wrong and Dr. Whitlock (played by Stellan Skarsgard), gets his arm bitten off!"

The scene is shot through the lab door, past where Harlin sits with his monitors. The shark thrashes loudly in the water. The air smells of spray as he strikes and a stunt man minus a stage arm goes down. In real time, without the benefit of digital enhancement, the sequence is horrifying. Even at rest, the mechanical shark is menacing, and so very life-like.

And so large. To get more of the chemical, it is necessary to grow the sharks, thus making their brains larger and more chemical-laden. But this also makes them smarter—like a dolphin—and far more dangerous.

"This is a horror film," Harlin said with a smile.

Joining the unfortunate Mr. Skarsgard



Director Renny Harlin rehearses Saffron Burrows on the set for her encounter with an experimental killer shark that has genetically enhanced intelligence.

are Saffron Burrows, Samuel L. Jackson, Thomas Jane, LL Cool J, Jacqueline McKenzie, Michael Rapaport and Aidan Turturro. Producing are Alan Riche, Tony Ludwig and Akiva Goldsman and the script is by Duncan Kennedy and John Zinman.

"The characters," Harlin said, "have a debate about what they should do with the shark. Basically the head scientist wants to release him. One of the other characters wants to kill it. The results are pretty devastating, because when this shark gets out, it's really pissed and it gets all the other sharks together. Then the people here really are in trouble."

With their larger brains, the enhanced sharks are formidable foes. Unlike *JAWS*, they're no longer "mindless eating machines." Noted Harlin, "These sharks take sort of a 50 million-year evolutionary leap by developing their brain. So now the sharks are as smart as dolphins. The shark's goal in life is to escape from the facility."

Harlin is using a combination of real sharks, animatronics and CGI to achieve the film's action, at a facility floating somewhere in the middle of the Pacific—two stories above water and several stories underneath. "Instead of designing a *STAR TREK*-type of a set where things are fiberglass, plastic and chrome, we wanted to give it a different kind of a look," said Harlin, calling the designs Art Deco. "We decided that the facility was built during WW II as a submarine refueling facility and then was mothballed by the Navy. And now

these scientists took it over and retrofitted it for their use, because it's in a perfect reef area where it's easier to capture sharks and keep them alive in the big, underwater tanks."

Research has led to the depiction of more realistic shark attacks in the film. "Sharks' jaws are not connected to their skull, so they float in their body," said Harlin. "When they bite, they come out. And this is the first time it's been put on film." Little blood, which will be added digitally, is visible on set.

The mechanical shark in the sequence displays a tremendous range and freedom of movement. "It's 25 feet long and weighs 8000 pounds and has a

1000 horsepower engine," said Harlin. "It's like a semi-truck. It's very dangerous. It definitely could crush you to death if you were in the wrong place. There's a kill switch. If anything goes wrong, they just push the button and it stops immediately."

The Baja facility used for filming offers the biggest indoor tank in the world. It's 200 by 100 feet, and about 30 feet deep. Everything is on hydraulic platforms, which can lift the set to fill the tank with water. At one point, the shark crashes into the submerged facility from outside. Noted Harlin of the filming, "We'll have 80 tons of water in big dump tanks with big water slides outside the window, which'll be on the edge of the pool at that time. Actors will be scrambling up the stairs to the back of the set. Simultaneously the set will drop four feet per second. In five seconds the set will be under water.

"We don't have any fight scenes," continued Harlin. "I like this movie because I get to make a movie without people shooting guns or having fisticuffs. This is more of an action thriller, where there are a lot of big sequences that have action in them but no firefights ... we do, of course, blow up the whole set," he added with a laugh. "I do believe that if you build it, you have to blow it up!"

The explosion involves a helicopter crash. Noted Harlin, "The shark pulls a helicopter into the facility, when Dr. Whitlock is taken to the surface during a big storm at night. He's being airlifted in a gurney into a

EA

shark thriller.

helicopter and the sharks think that is not a good idea, so one leaps out of the water and grabs the gurney and pulls it under the facility. The helicopter is unable to disengage the wire, so the helicopter gets pulled into the facility and blows up.”

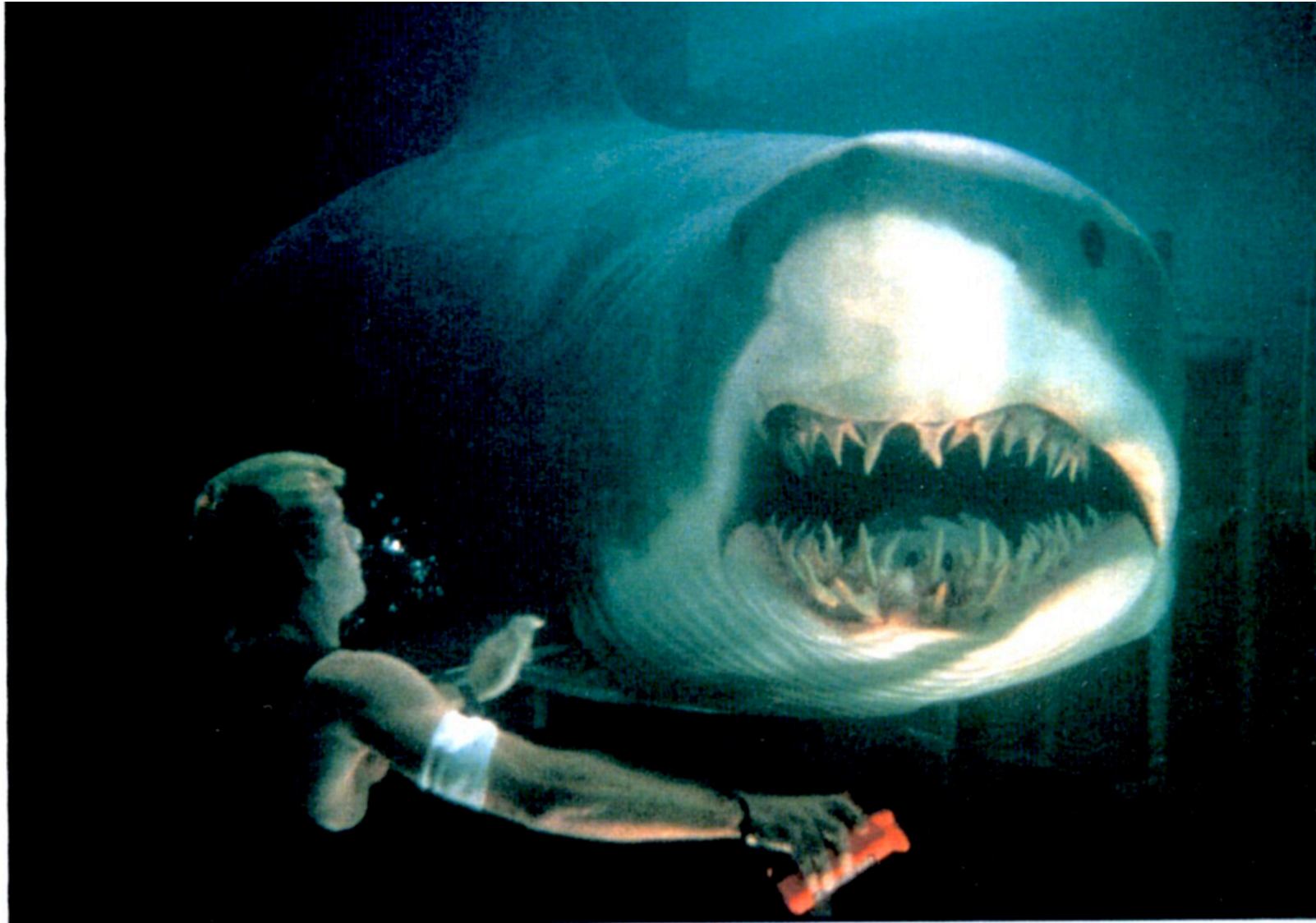
According to effects supervisor Jeff Okun, the most difficult sequence involves a storm sequence. “It’ll blow your socks off,” said Okun. “It’ll be phenomenal. It’s not going to be miniatures. It’ll be a combination of software oceans, practical elements that that can be composited in, and CG-3D facilities. You’ll see 50-ft. waves smashing people around and stuff like that.”

With the exception of Samuel L. Jackson, casting avoided using major stars. “We didn’t fill the movie with established stars, because nobody’s going to believe that Mel Gibson is going to get eaten by a shark. Or...Sandra Bullock is not going to die in the story. So we wanted to explore the idea of what we saw in JAWS, where at that time those actors were not big stars. It has to do with that feeling of reality in the movie. These are real people, like you and me, and we have no idea who’s going to die, and the people we think will live will die.

“So the key for me in the script was that the characters are three-dimensional and interesting, and at the same time, normal people. So next summer when we go swimming in the ocean, river, pool or bathtub, we can imagine these things coming up and biting us.”

Is there a message to this film? “There’s a very clear message, but I don’t know if you can print it,” Hatlin said with a chuckle. “It’s: don’t fuck with nature! Or maybe I should say, don’t mess with nature.”

Harlin has been interested for a long time in startling audiences. “As a kid, I was always creating horrific things,” Harlin admitted. “When I was in elementary school, about the age of seven, I would take thin black thread from my mom’s sewing box and rig the window at school to look like it’s broken. When the teacher walked in the room she’d go, ‘Oh my God! who broke the window!’ Always something like that. With my chemistry set, I always



Thomas Jane as Carter faces the enemy when the sentient sharks breach the hull of the government’s submerged lab facility. Harlin used a combination of mechanical sharks and post-production CGI models.

set my room on fire. I liked to come up with homemade devices. Before I started making films, we had an old fashioned reel to reel tape recorder, and I would do radio plays. I would hire all the neighborhood kids to play different parts, and then I would do all the sound effects myself. Live actually, while we were recording. Windows gave great thunder. Then I would set big speakers on our front lawn, and all the neighborhood kids would sit on the lawn and I would play it for them, and everyone would be very scared.

“Or we’d go in the forest and dig giant holes in the pathways and then cover them with little boards or tree branches and dirt, and have people fall in the holes!”

With a background like that, it’s no wonder Harlin went into movies. On NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET IV, THE DREAM MASTER, Harlin worked a bit with effects and animatronics, but nothing to the level of DEEP BLUE SEA.

“You have to plan this very carefully,”

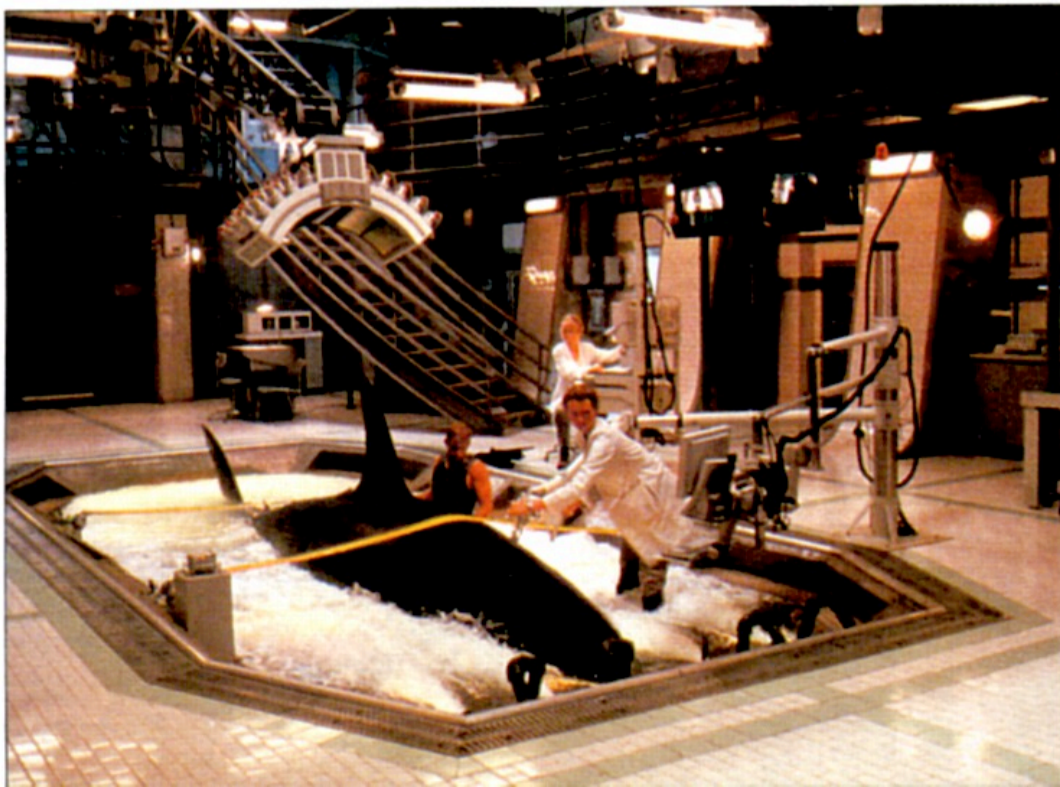
he said. “We spent ten months building these and they work beautifully, but it takes time. It takes a lot of organizing to plan the whole set around the animatronics. How it’s going to be there and how it’s going to be able to move and do its thing. I storyboard everything, every shot. Every day I make shot lists of everything. We always have a plan. I think I’ve learned from my mistakes in previous movies.

“The only way to get good results and do it safely, is to take your time, rehearse it, and get it right. Otherwise, it’s way too dangerous for the actors to be close to these things, because they are so powerful. “In a way, I would call this the first big budget horror film in 20 years. It really is a horror film, but it’s done with the scale of a big action movie.

“We hope that the SCREAM audience will eat it up, because it has the production values of a really big film, but it intends to create terror. And that was a challenge for me. To do a different kind of production that involved animatronics and CG and sharks and all that stuff.

“At the same time, it’s a great script. My key to this film is that—and I feel that it’s like the difference between JAWS and ALIEN. JAWS is real. Real shark, real people, real situation. And ALIEN is outer space, futuristic, and fantastical monster. I think with sharks, you have to try to make the situation as real as possible and the characters act as normal and everyday as possible, because the terror is very real. It’s not a fantasy that takes place somewhere that you could never go.” □

Harvesting shark brain chemicals in undersea lab Aquatica, Jane, Burrows and Jacqueline McKenzie tamper with things man was not meant to know.



THE IRON GIANT

Brad Bird directs the book by British poet Ted Hughes.

by Drew McWeeny

Every year, some studio in Hollywood releases an animated film in an effort to beat Disney at their own game. ANASTASIA, THE RUGRATS MOVIE, THE PRINCE OF EGYPT, ANTZ, BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD DO AMERICA—these films have all succeeded to some extent, but none have delivered the pure cinema kick promised by THE IRON GIANT, the debut feature directed by Brad Bird, which Warner Bros. will release on August 6.

Adapted from the classic 1968 children's book by renowned British poet Ted Hughes, THE IRON GIANT is an animated film that is aimed squarely at a family audience, but which doesn't resort to any of the now-familiar staples of the genre. There are no musical numbers. There are no talking animals. There's no comic relief grafted onto the film for the sake of laughs. Instead, there is a genuine, simple quality to the storytelling comparable to that of Hayao Miyazaki's films like KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE. The film, co-written by Bird with Brent Forrester (THE SIMPSONS, THE BEN STILLER SHOW) and Tim McCanlies (DANCER, TEXAS, POP. 81), features the voice work of Jennifer Aniston, Harry Connick, Jr., Vin Diesel, John Mahoney, and Christopher McDonald. Produced by Bird and Allison Abbate, the film has received a PG rating.

Ironically, the film actually began life as a musical. Working with Des MacAnuff, who successfully adapted The Who's seminal rock opera TOMMY into a Broadway production, guitarist Pete Townsend approached the studio with the idea of turning his studio album based on the book into a full-length animated film. Several scripts were

generated toward this end, and several teams worked on early designs of the story's central figure, a 50-foot-tall robot from space.

Townsend's musical followed the plot of Hughes' original book very closely. In it, a giant robot falls to Earth, then begins to stalk the English countryside, terrifying everyone who sees him. The only person who realizes that the Giant is actually gentle is a small boy, who befriends him. The townspeople, trying to protect themselves, trap the Giant in a scrap yard, where he seems content to eat old stoves, cars, and bicycles. When a space-bat the size of Australia appears over the earth, ready to attack, everyone must put their trust in the Giant, looking to him to be a hero. The book is written in lovely, simple language, and Townsend's musical tries hard to capture that quality. Brad Bird, an animation veteran, was developing an animated feature for Turner Pictures at the time, only to see several years of effort wasted when Turner was sold to Warner Bros., who promptly shelved Bird's project, a sci-fi/noir comedy called RAY GUNN. They asked him to look at the studio's other projects and find something that interested him.

At a studio open house, Bird saw artwork

Unlike Hughes' book, Bird's film is set in a storybook perfect 1950s America where Hogarth, the Giant's young friend, is weaned on sci-fi movies and TV.



Animating Hughes' renowned children's book.

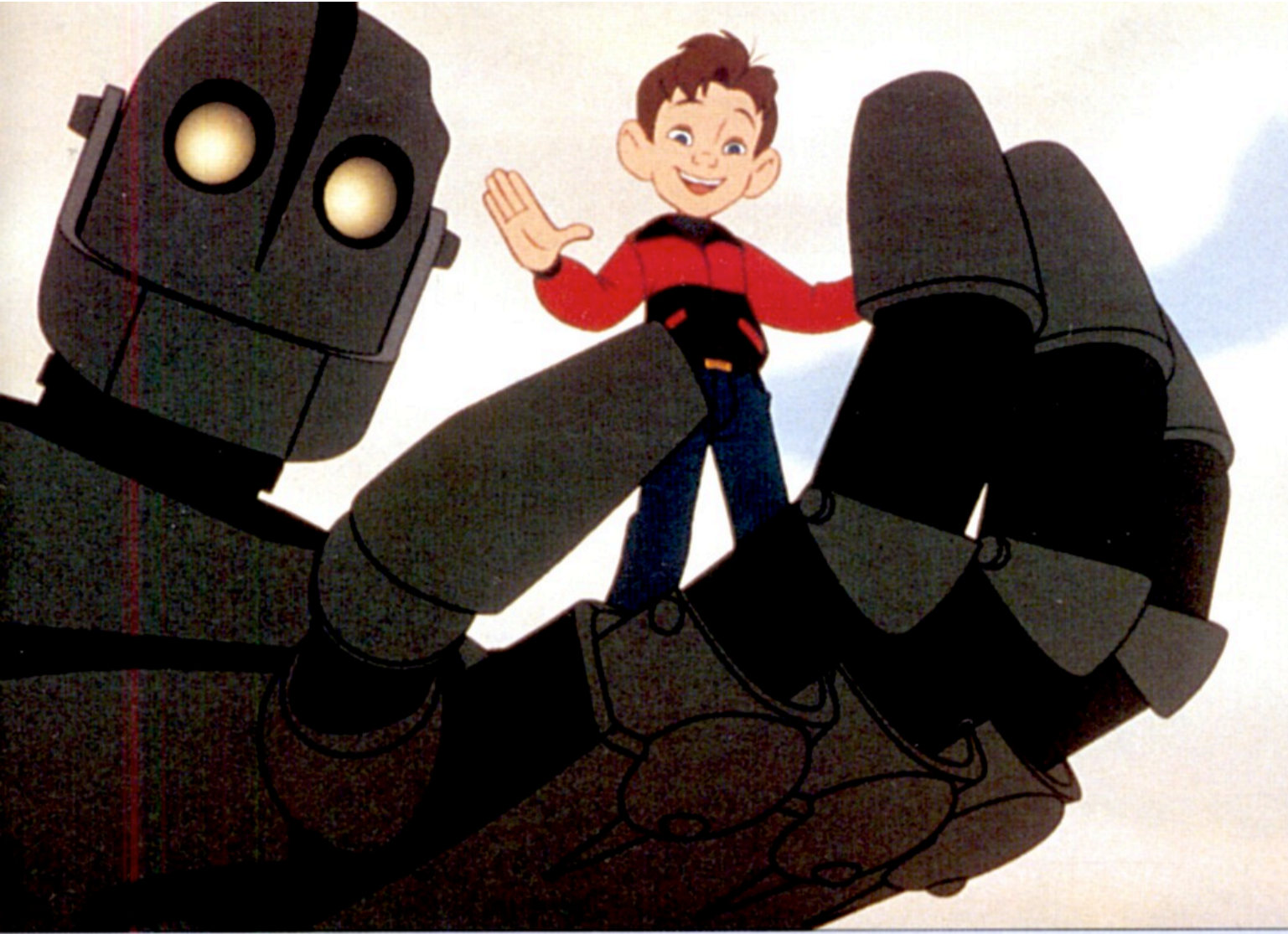
generated for THE IRON GIANT, and one painting in particular grabbed him. In it, the setting for the story was unmistakably America in the 1950s, a departure from the original book. Struck by this, Bird searched out the source material. Inspired by one aspect of the Hughes book, Bird pitched the studio with a single two-part question: "What if a gun had a soul, and it didn't want to be a gun?" He quickly found himself in pre-production on the studio's second full-length in-house animated feature, following 1998's disastrous THE QUEST FOR CAMELOT.

When Joe Johnston, famed for his work as a production designer on the original STAR WARS trilogy and as the director of THE ROCKETEER and JUMANJI, stepped in and did some preliminary design work on THE IRON GIANT as a favor to his friend Bird, the film's look came into focus. Set in a storybook-perfect 1950s America, and shot in glorious widescreen, the film mixes conventional 2-D character animation with 3-D backgrounds and computer models for objects like the Giant himself.

Bird and technical director Scott Johnson

came up with a new combination of techniques to guarantee that the Giant would seem to inhabit the same world as Hogarth, the boy who becomes his best friend. They used a combination of existing software and tools that they developed themselves to teach the computer to draw less perfectly and more like a human animator. The result is a seamless mix of styles that—according to those who've seen it—even surpasses Disney's latest effort, TARZAN.

Brad Bird has long been known in the animation commu-



Only a small boy realizes that a 50 foot tall giant robot from space is no menace, but actually friendly.

nity as a major talent. He finished his first homemade film at the age of 14, having spent three years working on it. This brought him to the attention of Disney. He attended Cal State Fullerton, and after school made his first real film, the inspired comic short *FAMILY DOG*. This became not only one of the most memorable episodes of Steven Spielberg's *AMAZING STORIES* anthology series, but a calling card that made Bird a hot commodity in town. When Amblin decided to develop *FAMILY DOG* as a weekly series, Bird bowed out, believing the cartoon's style of pantomime was impossible to do on a weekly basis.

Within a month, he found a home on *THE SIMPSONS* during the show's first season. He was brought in by Sam Simon and described to the crew as the show's "secret weapon." His onscreen credit was visual consultant, and his primary responsibility was to help take the simple locked-down style of the one-minute *SIMPSONS* shorts that were shown on *THE TRACEY ULLMAN SHOW* and translate them into something more cinematic. Producer James L. Brooks was determined that *THE SIMPSONS* not look like conventional television animation. Under the watchful eye of Bird, it quickly became obvious that the show was anything but conventional. Introducing complex camera moves, pans, long takes, quick cutting, and other devices that were commonplace in live action but unheard of in television animation, *THE SIMPSONS* paved the way for shows like *KING OF THE HILL*, *THE MAXX*, *REN & STIMPY*, and *AEON FLUX*.

Bird's first attempt at a feature film, *RAY GUNN*, was supposed

to be a sci-fi action film with a liberal dose of comedy and film noir attitude. Animators from every other studio in town were ready to leave their jobs to work on the picture, viewing it as a major leap forward in the effort to tell any other kind of story in animation than the typical Disney model. Turner Pictures, who was producing the film, kept it in development for several years before finally being sold to Warner Bros. Bird always saw *RAY GUNN* as a hard sell, and views *THE IRON GIANT* as a baby step that is necessary if a film like *GUNN* is ever going to be made.

In many ways, though, *THE IRON GIANT* is as adult as any animated film on record. Complex moral themes are played out in the film that set it apart from the standard family fare. Bird's hypothetical question not only successfully got Warner to commit to making the film, it also became the center of an adaptation that strayed from the original material. Bird sent Ted Hughes a copy of the film's script and some of the artwork to get the feedback of the esteemed author. When Hughes wrote back that he liked the script,

“Our generation is deathly afraid of being corny... I don't think you can ever get me on a certain level unless you roll the dice and risk looking foolish.”

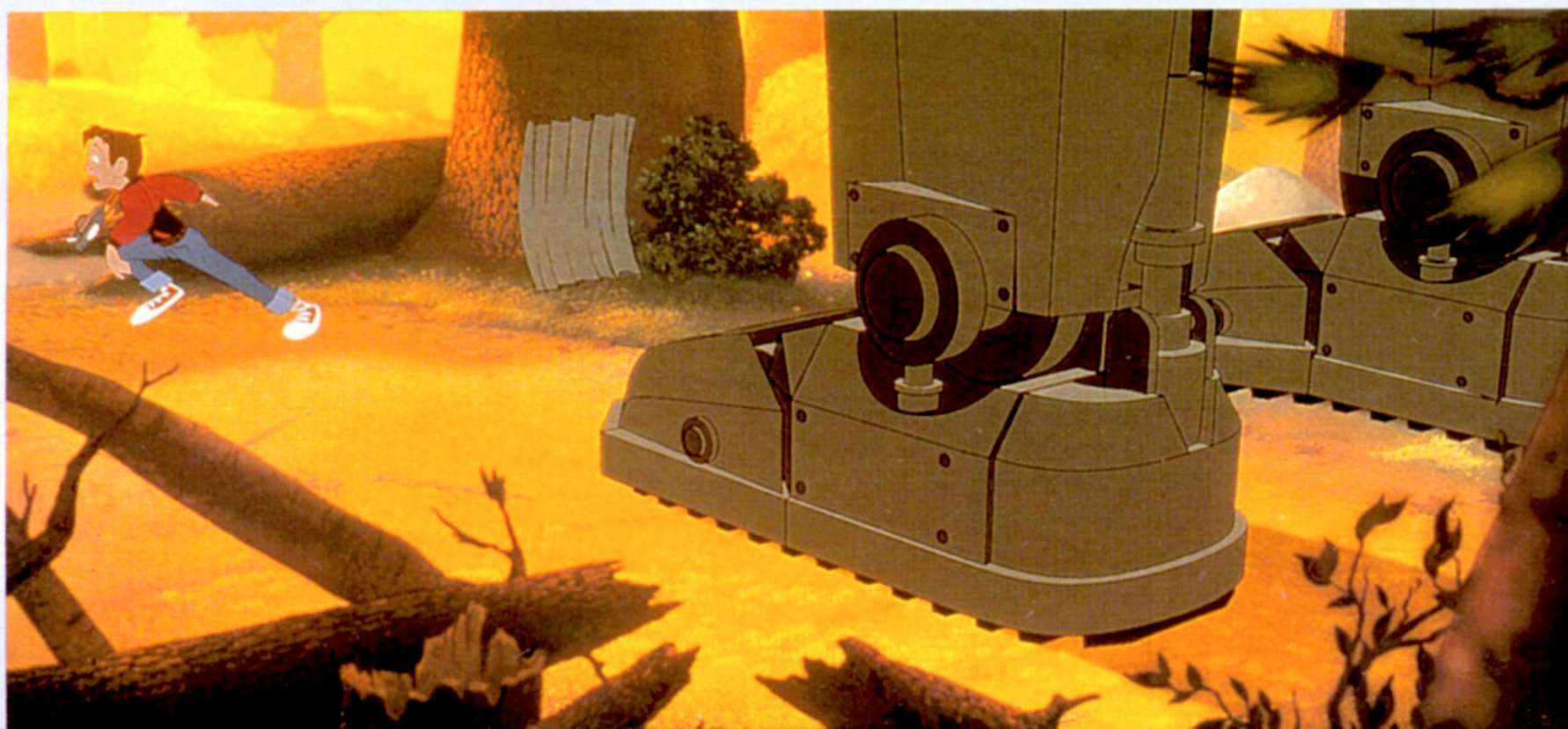
—Brad Bird, director—

using the same kind of verse in his letter that he did for the original story, even Pete Townsend was able to accept the changes, stepping aside for Bird's interpretation.

Perhaps the boldest choice made by Bird is the unabashed sentimentality of the film. There's a lovely sense of nostalgia to the 1950s art design, and the film uses pop icons like Superman, *MAD* magazine, and grade Z monster movies in clever and even touching ways. When asked about his decision to make the film so nakedly emotional, Bird said, "The thing that you risk in those kinds of moments, and this is coming from *THE SIMPSONS*, too, is our generation is deathly afraid of being corny to the point where we're sarcastic about everything. It's much, much easier to maintain that distance from your heart. I don't think you can ever get me on a certain level unless you roll the dice and risk looking really foolish."

When the film finally opens, audiences will be able to judge for themselves just how successful Warner Bros. has been in stepping out from under the considerable shadow of their Burbank neighbors on the Disney lot. Will American families be able to enjoy a film that has real ethical issues on its mind? Can an animated film without musical numbers be a hit? Can *THE IRON GIANT* overcome the perception of it as a simple children's film to connect with older audiences? At the very least, one thing is sure. By allowing a single filmmaker to follow his vision instead of creating a picture by committee, Warner Bros. has created a unique and visionary picture that is both a tribute to a beloved classic and a bold reimagining. □

The widescreen imagery mixes conventional 2-D animation with 3-D backgrounds and CGI modeling for the Iron Giant.





"Me Tarzan, You Jane"
of the movie
bastardizations is
replaced with the
genuine emotion of
the classic novel.
Below: British big-
game hunter Clayton
plans to capture apes
for sale to Europe.





Disney animation realizes Edgar Rice Burroughs' hero as movies never could.

By Mike Lyons

When Disney's 37th animated feature, *TARZAN*, hits theaters on June 18th, don't look for the title character to belt out a ballad as he swings from vine to vine. "We said, from the very beginning, 'Tarzan cannot sing!'" said Kevin Lima, who co-directed the film with Chris Buck. "We do not want this character to open his mouth and burst into song about how he loves living in the jungle. That's something that we just couldn't see happening."

Music and other comfortable elements will play a large role in *TARZAN*, but there won't be too many of the trappings you've come to expect from Disney animated features, as the film makers behind the studio's latest effort are attempting to, once again, shake loose from the now-familiar formula. "We wanted to do something different and not just a movie that was a sequel to itself," said *TARZAN*'s producer Bonnie Arnold (*TOY STORY*).

Long before Tarzan joined the ranks of such Disney "celmates" as Snow White, Peter Pan and Simba, however, the character was the brainchild of writer Edgar Rice Burroughs. A jack-of-all-trades, who worked as a gold miner, cowboy and even railroad policeman, before finding success as an author, Burroughs published the first of the character's novels, *Tarzan*



Ape foundling—true to Burroughs, lost child Tarzan is raised by ape mother Kala, voiced by Glenn Close. Disney's epic fantasy of the classic novel opens June 18.

of the Apes, in 1914.

Hollywood came knocking early for Tarzan, translating Burroughs' novel into the 1918 silent film, *TARZAN OF THE APES*. Innumerable re-makes and disparate film versions followed, most notably MGM's *TARZAN* series, which featured Olympic swimmer Johnny Weissmuller as Tarzan and Maureen O'Sullivan as Jane. The films jettisoned much of Burroughs' novel and became popular culture's perception of the character (speaking in broken English, the "Tarzan yell," etc.).

For decades that followed, Tarzan continued to reappear on movie screens, most recently in the ambitious *GREYSTOKE: THE LEGEND OF TARZAN*

LORD OF THE APES (1984) and 1998's unremarkable *TARZAN AND THE LOST CITY*.

Thanks to these versions, audience perception of *TARZAN* is one of a live-action hero, which came as the first challenge for the film makers at Disney. "When they first brought up the idea, I thought, 'Why make this movie?'" admitted co-director Lima, who last helmed *A GOOFY MOVIE*. "We found out later that it's the second most-made movie of all time."

After reading Burroughs' work, however, a glimmer of hope began to appear for the very animated possibilities. "Here was a chance to make Tarzan move like he does in the

book," said Chris Buck, who, after years in character animation, makes his co-directorial debut with the film. "There's always a guy swinging on a vine, or walking around, in a live-action film. This is a man who was raised by the apes and doesn't really know human locomotion, he knows how to move like the apes."

"I don't think anyone has seen Tarzan the way that Edgar Rice Burroughs has envisioned Tarzan," added master animator Glen Keane, who is supervising the title character. "Primarily because you could never find a human actor who wouldn't die in the process of filming, because Tarzan has to move like no human being can move. He is a man who is a genius of adaptation. He has developed the skills of an animal in the jungle and he moves like an animal. So, this was a character who really had to be animated in order to realize Burroughs' vision."

"The funny thing about Tarzan is that he's not Superman, but he is super-human," noted producer Arnold, adding, "That's something that really appealed to us, as well as the re-occurring theme of family. The directors and I felt that was an element that was true to the original story and yet had a lot of contemporary relevance. If you think about it, Tarzan is this kid who is adopted by another family."



DIRECTING ANIMATION

Chris Buck and Kevin Lima on co-directing Disney's feature cartoon ode to Burroughs' apeman.

By Mike Lyons

Only in animation could one find an analogy between TARZAN and A GOOFY MOVIE. "If you really look at the movies, they're about the same thing," said Kevin Lima, who directed GOOFY and co-directed TARZAN with Chris Buck. "Ultimately, they're about family and patching relationships. All of those themes sort of play through. For me, no matter what genre I go into, I always bring who I am to it."

Lima, a Rhode Island native who graduated from California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) remembers animation's bleakest days. "When I was in school, Disney suddenly said, 'We're not taking any more people.' Here you were, at school, wanting to work at Disney your whole life and you're told, 'Sorry the inn is closed.'"

Lima did eventually make it into the studio in 1985, but found that opportunities at Disney were limited at the time. So he left to pursue other projects, such as THE BRAVE LITTLE TOASTER and THE CHIPMUNK ADVENTURE. Lima said that these experiences, "showed me that there was a world outside of Disney, which is great, because you bring experiences beyond the Disney experience to the making of a film."

Lima made his way back to Disney, where, before directing A GOOFY MOVIE, he developed the characters of Ursula in THE LITTLE MERMAID and Lumiere in BEAUTY AND THE



Buck (l) and Lima, who directed Disney's A GOOFY MOVIE, CalArts graduates enjoying the fruits of a cartoon renaissance to bring Tarzan to animated life.

BEAST. He also storyboarded sequences for ALADDIN and THE LION KING, and animated the characters of Fagin in OLIVER AND COMPANY and Frank the lizard in THE RESCUERS DOWN UNDER.

It was during production on this last film that Lima married Brenda Chapman, a former Disney story artist, who is now at DreamWorks, where she served as co-director of THE PRINCE OF EGYPT.

Like Lima, Chris Buck is also a CalArts graduate and has also worked in a variety of jobs in animation. "I came here on FOX AND THE HOUND," re-

membered the Kansas native of his early Disney days. "Things were okay, but nothing was really happening yet." Buck left the studio and worked in various freelance jobs, such as commercials and the animated AMAZING STORIES episode "Family Dog." In addition, Buck also taught character animation classes at CalArts from 1988-93. He returned to the Disney studio on a full-time basis to work on POCAHONTAS, animating three of the film's characters: Grandmother Willow, Ratcliffe's servant, Wiggins and Percy, the villain's pet pooch.

With his background in personality animation, Buck noted that giving that up for directing TARZAN was one of the hardest adjustments. "Sitting there watching the guys bringing in scenes, I had the worst time, because I was always re-timing things. I was always taking scenes out. In fact, Glen Keane would joke about this sound—shook!—that the computer makes when you take a frame out."

Like most animation co-directors, Lima and Buck are opposites who dovetail together perfectly. Lima, with long blond hair swept back in a pony tail, is (you'll forgive the pun) extremely animated and exuberant. Buck, in glasses, close-cropped hair and a beard, takes a more laid back approach. "I stand up on the table and act things out," admitted Lima. "I'm notorious for that. Chris always explains things verbally." Added Buck, "I love just sitting there, saying, 'See what Kevin just did? That's what I meant.'"

Now, after travelling through both the peaks and valleys of the animation industry, Lima and Buck are happy to be sitting in the directors' chairs during the current animation juggernaut. "The resurgence has been great," said Lima. "I've gotten to do things that ten years ago would have never happened." Buck added that deep down he felt someday animation would make its comeback. "I knew that there was all this talent that was just building up and I just felt like something had to happen." □

PRODUCER BONNIE ARNOLD

“The funny thing about Tarzan is that he’s not Superman, but he is super-human. That . . . and the theme of family. . . Tarzan is this kid who is adopted by another family.”

Lima also added that the concept of Tarzan’s interaction with the animals of the jungle also rang a bell, in terms of the story dovetailing nicely into the fantasy-realm that animation can provide. “Our apes talk. There’s that communication ability between Tarzan and this family that he grows up with. That opened up a big door for us in that we would discover and explore this whole world.”

According to the directors, developing TARZAN came with very few of the speed bumps that usually accompany adapting stories for animation. “We were lucky in that our story is somewhat simpler,” noted Lima. “Not emotionally, but in terms of plot, it’s simpler. We also have fewer characters in this movie. We decided to stick with our main character as the driving force.” Lima also added that this impacted the film’s future development. “The plot didn’t evolve that much, but the way in which scenes play out evolved.”

As Disney’s TARZAN opens, we are introduced to jungle life, which is interrupted by the cry of a baby. Kala, a female gorilla, who has recently lost her own baby, investigates the cry and discovers the infant, Tarzan, who has just lost his own parents.

At the moment she finds him, the fierce leopard, Sabor, attacks. Kala is able to rescue Tarzan and brings him back to live with the apes, who are uncertain about Kala’s decision to raise this “strange and hairless” baby. Kerchak, the revered, mammoth, silverback ape leader, most fears the dangers that this child may bring.

Despite his opposition, Kala refuses to abandon Tarzan and immediately

loves him as her own. “The relationship between Kala and Tarzan is so strong and is this great bond throughout the movie,” said Russ Edmonds, supervising animator for Kala, adding, “My character winds up going through an emotional roller-coaster in this film.”

It is Kala’s protection and encouragement that allows Tarzan to thrive and survive in the jungle. As a young boy, Tarzan notices how different he is from the other apes and wants desperately to fit in (in one scene, straight out of Burroughs, the young Tarzan smears mud on his face in an attempt to make himself more ape-like).

Helping Tarzan to fit in are his two best friends. One is his surrogate “older sister,” Terk, the gorilla. A bossy tomboy, who would do pretty much anything for her “hairless buddy.” Terk now joins an illustrious list of Disney sidekicks, which is fine by the character’s supervising animator, Mike Surrey, who has pretty much cornered the market, after working on LION KING’s Timon and HUNCHBACK’s Clopin. “The great things about sidekicks is that they do give you a variety of acting,” he said. “Your villain or your main character has to be inside a certain range. Sidekicks

Young Tarzan learns to master the jungle, animation by Disney master Glen Keane.



Jane of the jungle, accompanying the expedition of her primatologist father, animated by Ken Duncan (r) and voiced by actress Minnie Driver.

are much broader. In the case of Terk, she goes from being sarcastic to supportive to angry with Tarzan throughout the film and it’s nice as an animator to get that variety.”

Tarzan’s other best bud is Tantor, a neurotic elephant, who always has Tarzan’s best interest at heart. With these two friends, Tarzan grows up in the jungle determined to fit in. His ability to observe, imitate and adapt allows him to grow into a unique creature who can glide through the jungle with an agility that’s unlike any other of its inhabitants.

As he grows into adulthood, Tarzan even gains the acceptance of the other gorillas, including Kerchak, when the apes’ most feared predator is defeated by Tarzan. However, the day that many, especially Kala, had feared, eventually comes—other humans arrive in



the jungle.

These strangers to the jungle are in an expedition, led by Professor Porter, a primatologist, who has come to the jungle to study gorillas. “Porter, in archetypical terms, is the ‘Nutty Professor’ stereotype,” joked the character’s supervising animator, Dave Burgess. “But, I hope that he breaks that a little bit. He’s goofy, he thinks quickly and he stutters a little bit, but, what we really were trying to get with him was a real father figure and have a really strong bond between him and his daughter, Jane.”

Yes, that’s correct, Porter’s daughter who accompanies her father on his expedition is Jane, of the now famous “Me Tarzan...” exchange. Look for this version of TARZAN to reshape this character as never before. “She’s a spirited girl, she’s very inquisitive and very enthusiastic,” said Jane’s supervising animator, Ken Duncan. “Her personality, in going to the jungle, is a young woman with a very broad imagination of what she’s going to see. In the beginning, unfortunately, it’s a lit-

tle different from what she imagines. So, that positive perception she had changes a little bit. It's actually Tarzan who allows her to see the way the jungle really is. It makes her more of a textured character than we've seen in past films."

It is this curiosity that actually leads to Jane's meeting with Tarzan, as he rescues her from a group of feral baboons (in what may be one of animation's most kinetic action sequences). It is after this that Tarzan travels to the Porter camp, where he meets the other humans, including Clayton, the British big game hunter, who has accompanied the expedition. Clayton befriends Tarzan, but only for insidious reasons. The hunter has plans to capture apes and ship them to Europe for sale.

The fact that the other characters, as well as the audience, are unsure of Clayton's true intentions, puts a new spin on the mold of the Disney villain, according to the character's supervising animator, Randy Haycock. "The biggest difference between Clayton and lots of past Disney villains is that his villainy is less obvious. I had to keep it subtle and less obvious because the other characters don't know that he's a bad guy until later in the film. So, he had to have a certain duality to his personality. The audience has to be clued in on it, so that they ac-

Lance Henriksen voices Kerchak, the mammoth silver-haired ape leader who is slow to accept Tarzan.



GLEN KEANE

Tarzan's master animator on breathing life into Burroughs' hero.

By Mike Lyons

For any director, working with the likes of Brando, DeNiro or Nicholson must be, to say the least, intimidating. Kevin Lima and Chris Buck know how they must feel. While the co-directors of *TARZAN* may never have dealt with Marlon, Robert or Jack, they have, in animation terms, worked with their equivalent—Glen Keane.

"It was a nerve-wracking thing when Glen's name came up," said Buck, who, along with Lima, had once worked under Keane. "We were told that Glen would like to do [the character of] Tarzan. I thought, 'Can I really tell Glen what to do?'"

"I was scared to death," admitted Lima. "I thought, 'He's never going to listen to me.' I was most afraid of it in the beginning and he was the one I was least concerned about in the end."

"He's so confident in his ability," added Buck, "that he could say to us, in a sense, 'You guys are the keeper of the film, I am the keeper of Tarzan. I am going to keep the quality of the character going, but you guys know how it all fits together.'"

Glen Keane has changed the well-worn animator axiom of "actor with a pencil" to "major thespian wielding a number two." Combining dynamic, energetic artistry with emotions that both spill out furiously and seep out slowly through drawings, Keane epitomizes the heights to which many animators are attempting to climb.

In a phone interview from Disney's Paris studio, the master



Keane's early exploratory drawing of Tarzan. A Disney veteran since 1974, Keane animated Tarzan while based at Disney's Paris studio.

animator said that the key to distinguishing oneself in the medium lies in one word: sincerity. "You have to really believe in the character that you are animating, which is not as easy as it might sound. I think that there's a tendency sometimes for people to be cynical about the character—'Ah, that's just a cartoon. It's not real.' But, to really crawl into that character and make it live, you've got to become emotionally involved with the character."

Whether it's the yearning angst of a mermaid, a heartsick Beast or a young con artist searching for a magic lamp, Keane has also shown a unique ability to invest his characters with rich personality.

"I love the phase of exploring a character," said Keane. "It's like you're trying to find something that's already there. I always believe that the right

character is there, it's just waiting for me to discover it, somehow."

With artistic talent in his genes (Glen's father is cartoonist Bill Keane, who created the comic strip, "The Family Circus") Keane first came to the Disney studio in 1974. There he learned the art form first hand from such masters of the medium as Frank Thomas, Ollie Johnston, Milt Kahl and Eric Larson—some of the studio's "Nine Old Men," who had worked on Disney's greatest films. It was from these lessons that Keane learned to imbue his drawings with heart.

A watershed moment for the animator at the studio came with 1981's *THE FOX AND THE HOUND*. Assigned to the film's climactic battle with a giant grizzly bear, Keane's early sketches would help define the exciting, visceral animation. In their book, *The Disney Villain*, Thomas and Johnston wrote of Keane's work on the film: "Glen's concepts went far beyond the ordinary story sketches he had been given, and established him as a top directing animator for the new era."

Keane turned to villainy for his future assignments, animating both Ratigan in *THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE* and Sykes in *OLIVER AND COMPANY*. After this, Keane's work took a more soulful turn, as he fashioned the spirited girl next door (based on his wife) with Ariel (sharing animating duties with another master, Mark Henn) in *THE LITTLE MERMAID*. For 1990's sequel *THE RESCUERS DOWN UN-*



Tarzan rescues Jane and brings her to safety in the treetops. Directors Kevin Lima and Chris Buck likened directing Keane (r) to working with a great actor.

GLEN KEANE, ANIMATOR

“I’ve taken things from my life and put them into my work. When I started, I thought it was about the craft of filmmaking and the art of animation. Now I realize it’s a lot more about life.”

an exploration of “giving up, sacrifice and fathers and sons.”

TARZAN marks Keane’s return to animation, after leaving the studio following POCAHONTAS’ completion for a sabbatical in Paris. “I did some sculpting and studied anatomy,” Keane said of his time off. “I did a sculpture where I built the whole skeleton first in clay and then added each of the muscles on to the skeleton. Then, I sculpted the fat, the skin, the

about being here that afforded me a close relationship with the animators. It could be because I felt that I had to make an extra effort to communicate in French. We worked very closely and I’ve never worked with a group of animators who were so hungry to learn and were such perfectionists. They were never satisfied with their work and were almost masochistic that way.”

Looking back on his early days at the studio, when he attempted to get more feeling into his drawings by simply pushing harder on his pencil, Keane paused to reflect on the journey both he and the animation industry have taken since.

“Whether drawing the volley ball players on the beach for ALADDIN, or finding the live-action model for POCAHONTAS at my son’s Tai-Kwan-Do class or The Little Mermaid being based on my wife—I now realize that these ‘supposed accidents’ are not accidents. I’ve just taken things from my life and put them into my work. When I first started, I thought it was more about the craft of filmmaking and the art of animation. Now I realize that it’s a lot more about life. I’m no longer surprised by the miracles that happen. I’ve started to count on them.” □



DER, Glen switched gears to create Marahute, the giant golden eagle, and the following year, he would animate the studio’s most soul-searching character, the Beast in BEAUTY AND THE BEAST. For this character, Keane made numerous sketching trips to the zoo, borrowing the characteristics of different animals. For his next film, Glen found himself at the beach, sketching young men who were

playing volleyball. The lean, V-shape of their torso would go on to become the look for the title character in ALADDIN (1992).

In 1995, he brought new subtleties to animation with the title character in POCAHONTAS. Next for the animator, after TARZAN, is the villain Long John Silver in TREASURE PLANET, Disney’s sci-fi take on Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*. Keane calls the film

hair and everything else. It’s a complete piece, but underneath it is the value of building from the skeleton out. I feel as if I’ve learned a lot about anatomy throughout that process. When it came time to do Tarzan, that became the foundation.”

Keane enjoyed Paris so much that he stayed at Disney’s studio there, working on TARZAN long-distance with Burbank. “There was something

Keane’s jungle king, fighting Sabor (l), the apes’ most feared predator. Noted Keane of the film’s challenge, “Tarzan has to move like no human being can move.” Right: Opposites attract: on their first meeting, Tarzan lets the exuberant Jane know that she talks too much, after rescuing her from a pack of rampaging hyenas.





DEEP CANVAS

An animation revolution in computer graphics.

By Mike Lyons

Remember these two words: "Deep Canvas." That's the name given to the new computer software program that was created to enrich the jungle backgrounds of TARZAN. Just from early, scant footage, it's evident that this new form of computer generated imagery (CGI) reaches its goal, but what many don't yet realize is that it

and cleared my mind of everything I knew about computer graphics and just listened to what they wanted to see."

The idea was to create images that could blend in easily with the traditional animation and also retain the hand-painted look of a background. The film makers also wanted the freedom to move the camera in the same free-style tracking shots that a live-action director would use. In addition, there could be no crisp, hard edges or other synthetic touches that usually accompany CGI.

One of the first people to embrace this new process was Glen Keane, supervising animator for TARZAN, who worked with a layout artist in developing an animation test of the title character moving through the tree tops. The footage would be the first proving ground for "Deep Canvas." Daniels remembered, "In Glen's mind he was saying, 'Okay, Tarzan will reach and grab that vine and fly across here, then he'll grab this and



Deep Canvas paintings come to life—Tarzan surveys his jungle domain.

move around this way.' To us it was just this tree spinning by, but Glen had it all in his head. So, when he started 'roughing-in' the animation, it suddenly all came together and the movie made sense."

Here is how "Deep Canvas" works: an artist paints a background, except here, a stylus (think a mouse, shaped like a pen) is their brush and a small, flat, "digitizer tablet" is their canvas. Each one of the

artist's strokes on the digitizer is recorded by the computer. When the program is played back, "Deep Canvas" can regenerate the same painting "pixel for pixel" and subtly change where each brush stroke is from frame-to-frame. In other words, where animation is "moving drawings" this is, quite literally, a "moving painting." "We are actually re-painting the background for each frame," explained Daniels, "by just moving the brush strokes a little bit."

"Deep Canvas" not only allows an audience to step inside a painting, but it also comes with a tremendous amount of advantages for the artist. Unlike dealing with actual paint, there are no fumes and there's no such thing as running out of a certain color. In addition, there's no turpentine or thinner needed if a mistake occurs, "Deep Canvas" artists can "un-



Eric Daniels, supervisor of CGI for TARZAN, created the new software with Disney programmers Tasso Lappas and George Katanics.

may also revolutionize the way in which 2D and 3D animation are combined in future Disney films.

Eric Daniels, who serves as head of the CGI unit for TARZAN, created this new software, with Disney programmers Tasso Lappas and George Katanics. "The technique grew out of a lot of different, conflicting desires on this film," said Daniels. "The first thing I did was sit down with all of the other department heads

Tarzan and ape companion Terk, capturing dynamic action by freeing-up the movement of the animation camera, an innovation that will revolutionize animation.





Deep Canvas paintings come to life—Tarzan surveys his jungle domain.

do” the last 32 strokes.

Like many new computer advances, there are, of course, rumblings and rumors of human expendability swirling around “Deep Canvas,” which Daniels is quick to quash. “It was important to me that this be a tool for the artist and not particularly a showcase for me and my crew. We shifted focus. We didn’t go after the glory of making all of these cool images. We went after helping artists create images. Artists by themselves would never be able to do this, but neither could technicians do this by themselves. It had to be a combination of those two worlds, or else we wouldn’t have this. That is what I’m proudest of.”

TARZAN producer Bonnie Arnold, who also produced the landmark computer animated TOY STORY, added, “It’s not about the art form going away, it’s now about animating to plot points. It’s a new discipline that the artists are excited about.” The process has already brought about bug-eyed wonder from those involved

with the film. “When I saw the first samples of it, about two years ago, I said, ‘Whoa! You can actually do that?!’” said Mike Surrey, supervising animator for the character of Terk.

Such reaction has started a “buzz” that “Deep Canvas” may join other landmarks of animation technology. Among them, the Multiplane Camera, which was invented in 1937, to bring a sense of depth to animation, or 1961’s Xerography, which saved artists the time-consuming step of transferring drawings on to cels and 1990’s Computer Animation Production System (CAPS), which used the computer to assemble various elements of the film.

“I think this may be the future of the way in which 3-D scenes are done,” said Daniels. “A lot of people don’t yet realize how versatile this approach to graphics is, because they only see this movie. But I think there are vast areas that we could explore with this technology.” □

GLEN KEANE, “TARZAN” ANIMATOR

“Putting Tarzan in danger is something that makes him feel alive. I started to think of him as a ‘tree-surfer.’ He surfs the branches, which became like a freeway for him to move along.”

cept it when he turns, but it has to be subtle enough so that it’s not too obvious to the other characters.”

Clayton’s actions set up a conflict within Tarzan, as he is torn between the jungle family he feels he has now betrayed and this new human family that has somewhat betrayed him.

The character’s internal battle allowed Glen Keane to work with a rich personality. “We were trying to define our characters with one word descriptions,” he said. “Tarzan’s was ‘driven.’ This is a man who’s driven to find himself. At the beginning, he realizes that he’s a gorilla and that’s who he believes that he is. Then, in the second act he realizes that he’s a man, as he finds himself a part of the human world. In the end, he realizes that, ‘It’s me. I’m Tarzan.’”

As a character trapped between these two worlds, Keane had the added challenge of making Tarzan seem a mixture of both primate and human. “The first mistakes that we were making was to interpret the animal movements too closely, so that Tarzan moved just like a

gorilla,” remembered Keane. “As soon as we did that, he didn’t seem intelligent. We had to take him a step further. You could take your original inspiration from the movement of a gorilla or a panther, but then you had to add a human intelligence to it.”

In creating Tarzan’s fluid movements through the tree tops it was not the animal world, but instead the realm of “extreme sports” that Keane said he turned to for inspiration. After observing his son’s love for roller-blading, snow boarding and skate-boarding, the animator found a link for his character. “I started thinking of Tarzan like that. He has to be moving through the jungle, always on the edge. Putting him in danger is something that makes him feel alive. I started

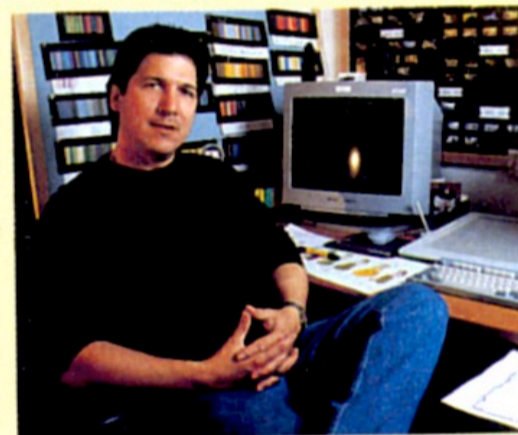


Jane with her primatologist father Professor Porter, animated by Dave Burgess (r) to break out of the Absent-Minded Professor stereotype.





Jungle as character: a dynamic setting was sought to frame the adventures of Burroughs' ape-man as the author originally envisioned.



Art director Dan St. Pierre

ART DIRECTION

Designing Disney's "ultimate jungle."

By Mike Lyons

The "ultimate jungle." That's what the filmmakers behind Disney's TARZAN wanted. Unlike recent animated efforts from the studio that have derived their look from a single artist or even from reality, the jungle in TARZAN is one that could only be created in the ani-

mated world.

"We didn't have one particular thing that we could point to and say, 'That's it,'" said co-director Chris Buck. "It's not that we didn't want that, it just didn't happen right away." "The idea wasn't to create a realistic world," said producer Bonnie Arnold. "But to create a believable world."

This meant that TARZAN's art director, Dan St. Pierre had his work cut out for him, creating everything from scratch. "We're manufacturing a world," he noted. "It has to feel real."

The concept of creating this "ultimate jungle" sprang from an early pre-production trip that some key members of the TARZAN crew took to Africa.

"We all had the same experience of being in that jungle together," said St. Pierre. "For me, I felt that there were elements there that had to be in the movie." Co-director Kevin Lima added that the abundance of vegetation in the jungle created its own look. "One of the things we decided after going to Africa, was that we could never

Left: Young Tarzan learns to fly ape-style as he grows up in a jungle paradise. Right: His chimp friend takes a ride after Tarzan rescues Jane from feral baboons.



have a flat plain. Most animation is done on that flat plain, but we decided to have the characters ankle deep, or even knee deep, in the vegetation whenever possible."

To this look, the film makers added a few flourishes, most notably the work of concept artists Paul Felix and John Watkiss. Adding to this challenge was "Deep Canvas," the new computer software, designed to allow the animation in the film the ability to take on depths that had never before been achieved in animation. "All of the departments had to be trained and become proficient at using digital equipment," said St. Pierre, adding, "People would say to me, 'What do we do with this now?' and I'd have to say, 'I don't know, it's never been done before.' We had to invent things as we went along. This was our opportunity to step up and make a contribution."

In addition to "Deep Canvas," St. Pierre said he also discovered a way to let color enhance Tarzan's journey. "What's happening to Tarzan also affects everything around him. So, what's happening with him was what told me where to go with color. I'd look at environments that he was in when certain things happened and get clues from that." If for example, there was a moment of heightened emotion, St. Pierre figured a way to have the light of sunset filter into the forest and cut through the overall green colors of the background.

With his soft voice and quiet demeanor, St. Pierre takes the challenges of art direction in stride, just another day at the office. "The process, for me, is the best part of it. I like to see the end result, but I also enjoy figuring out and solving all of the problems along the way. It's like a huge puzzle. A new thing will come along each day that you have to figure out and come up with a solution for. That keeps it really interesting. It's a gruelling process, but not a bad one." □

RANDY HANCOCK, "CLAYTON" ANIMATOR

"With the villain, I thought, 'What conflict can he have? He's the bad guy.' But the fun was that duplicity. How can I make Clayton seem charming and likable and yet not totally likable."



Clayton, the film's big-game hunter in search of apes, animated by Randy Haycock (r) to provide a villainous ambiguity that fools everyone but Tarzan.

to think of him as a 'tree-surfer.' He surfs the branches, which became like a freeway for him to move along."

As the voice for Tarzan, actor Tony Goldwyn (GHOST) also became a defining factor, according to Keane. "His voice comes out a very low register. It almost has an animal quality to it. The resonance of the voice was very important to me, because Tarzan wasn't going to be speaking a lot. That made what he does say so much more important."

The influence of the voice actor played an even larger role in the creation of Jane. Cast in the part was Minnie Driver, whose recording sessions were a true turning point for supervising animator Ken Duncan. "She really had these exaggerated poses," noted Duncan. "When she was listening to the directors, her neck would really stretch out and when she talked she had these really big mouth shapes. So, it was really just a matter of looking at her. I also liked her face. She has a really pronounced jawbone, so I tried

to get straight lines in the jaw and get a round cheeky look."

Duncan, who last worked on HERCULES' Meg, joked that he can't seem to stray too far from leading ladies. "I guess I'm the girlie man," he laughed. In fact, Duncan came on to TARZAN only one week after finishing HERCULES and said he was immediately jolted into the reality of how vastly different his two leading ladies were. "Meg was very street-wise and Jane doesn't have that quality at all, which was interesting in doing the design, as I was trying to break away from Meg. I really tried to get into [Jane's] personality. She's a very innocent person, in a very bright-eyed way. She's not a stupid person, just very innocent. When I designed her, I tried to think of her in that way."

Another compelling aspect of Jane's personality is her relationship with her father, Professor Porter. "We wanted these two characters to really care about each other and really connect," said Porter's supervising animator, Dave Burgess, who, like Duncan, had a difficult time getting a handle on his character during the film's early stages.

"The initial introduction of Porter, in one version of the film, had him wearing an ape suit, so that he could attract apes. It just made him look like a goof ball. So, we pulled it out. The ape suit would have gotten a laugh, but I think it was a bit too much."

Instead of just crafting Porter as this absent-minded comic relief, Burgess said he decided to give the character, "boyish enthusiasm for life and learning and for all of his experiences."

Adding to this quality is actor Nigel Hawthorne (THE



MADNESS OF KING GEORGE) who provides Porter's voice. "It's funny, because the character doesn't look like Nigel," admitted Burgess. "There's no direct caricature of Nigel in Porter's design. But, there is a warmth that comes through in Nigel's performance that I tried to put into Porter."

As part of Porter's expedition, the villainous big game hunter, Clayton, became one of the film's most challenging aspects: how do you hide a villain's true intentions, until the last act of the film? "That was the fun of him, as a character," said supervising animator Randy Haycock. "He's the first villain that I've done. All the characters that I've animated before were hero characters. The thing that I found interesting about those characters is that they all had some kind of conflict. You're able to get inside their head a little bit and they're able to work out more complex emotions. With the villain, I thought, 'What conflict can he have? He's the bad guy.' But really, the fun in Clayton was trying to show that duplicity—how can I make him seem charming and likable and yet



Terk (right), Tarzan's ape sidekick, animated by Mike Surrey (left) who used the voice performance by Rosie O'Donnell for character inspiration.

not totally likable."

The majority of Clayton's charm came directly from the voice actor Brian Blessed (Little John in *ROBIN HOOD: PRINCE OF THIEVES*). "He did his audition and we all just sat there scared. When he left we all looked at each other and said, 'He is Clayton!'" laughed producer Arnold, adding, "He is so suave and so charming that he could tell you anything and you'd believe him. He'd tell us these stories during the voice sessions. We'd come out of these sessions and say to one another, 'Did you guys believe that?'"

"We started talking about what made Brian so charismatic," added Haycock, "and we realized that was what we needed to get into the character. Even some of his features—Brian Blessed has a huge smile, with these big teeth and dimples—so I made sure that I got that into Clayton's smile, so that we could get some of that charm that Brian has into the personality."

For Russ Edmonds, supervising animator for Kala, Tarzan's adoptive gorilla

mother, it was just the opposite. Cast in the role was Glenn Close, whose performance was most definitely against type. "That threw me off," admitted Edmonds. "It was like, 'Okay, we're going to give you this giant ape and we want it to have this tiny little voice.'" The animator soon found that Close's performance gave a new dimension to Kala's personality. "She brought all the softness to the character. Her voice became the character. You couldn't do a whole lot of movement with the character. You had to slow the pace down. After I listened to the tape of her voice, I looked at some of our first designs and a lot of people came in and looked over my shoulder and said, 'Okay, how are you going to do this one?'"

In finding the emotions that his character experiences during the film, Edmonds didn't have

TARZAN's song composer Phil Collins coaxes a vocal performance out of Rosie O'Donnell as Terk, rehearsing a rousing musical number called "Trashin' the Camp."



MIKE SURREY, "TERK" ANIMATOR
"Rosie O'Donnell's amazing. You give her a joke and she'll ad lib seven or eight funny ones. It's dangerous, though. You don't want it to be Terk as Rosie, you want it to be Rosie as Terk."

to look any further than his own life. "During production, my father passed away," remembered Edmonds. "When I came back from the funeral, all of this emotional, gut-wrenching stuff came across my desk. That's when I was able to use my experiences back home."

In terms of Kala's look, Edmonds, along with many of the other animators on the film, observed and sketched gorillas at the zoo. At one point, a baby chimp was even brought to the Disney studio, in order to help achieve a sense of naturalism. "I was used to doing quadrupeds," noted Edmonds. "And a gorilla is somewhere between a quadruped and biped. They walk completely different than any other animal."

"They're so big and dense and yet they move effortlessly," said Mike Surrey, supervising animator for Terk. "It was a challenge figuring that out and then how to get that into an animated character."

Another wellspring of inspiration for Surrey was Terk's vocal counterpart, Rosie O'Donnell. Said Surrey, "She's amazing for the fact that you can give her an average joke and she will ad lib seven or eight funny ones."

Surrey incorporated O'Donnell's trademark elements of

talking out of the corner of her mouth and gesturing with her hands into Terk, but also said that he had to be careful about not letting the comedienne overshadow the character. "You don't want it to be Terk as Rosie, you want it to be Rosie as Terk. It has to be about the character. There are a lot of similarities between Rosie's on-screen performances and the character, which is what you want to grab from and put in there, because it's appealing. It's dangerous, though, because you don't want to start writing the scenes for how they work for Rosie, you have to think about how they work for Terk."

Other voices in *TARZAN*'s cast include Lance Henriksen (TV's *MILLENNIUM*) as Kerchak, Wayne Knight (*SEINFELD*'s Newman) as Tantor and Alex D. Linz (*HOME ALONE 3*) as Young Tarzan.

Another familiar voice that many will recognize in the film is Phil Collins, but don't listen for his voice to be attached to a character. Collins, who wrote the songs for the film, sings most of the numbers over the soundtrack (much like Randy Newman and *TOY STORY*). Arnold remembered how, from the very beginning, Collins' initial involvement showed her how different *TARZAN* would be from the "Broadway mold." "When I first came on the project, they gave me a cassette of three early pieces that Phil did. Listening to these demos, I got a real sense of what the movie was going to be like and it was really exciting."

"Phil has become the emotional voice of Tarzan throughout the story," added Lima. "When the songs kick in, they are dealing on a different level. They're express-



EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

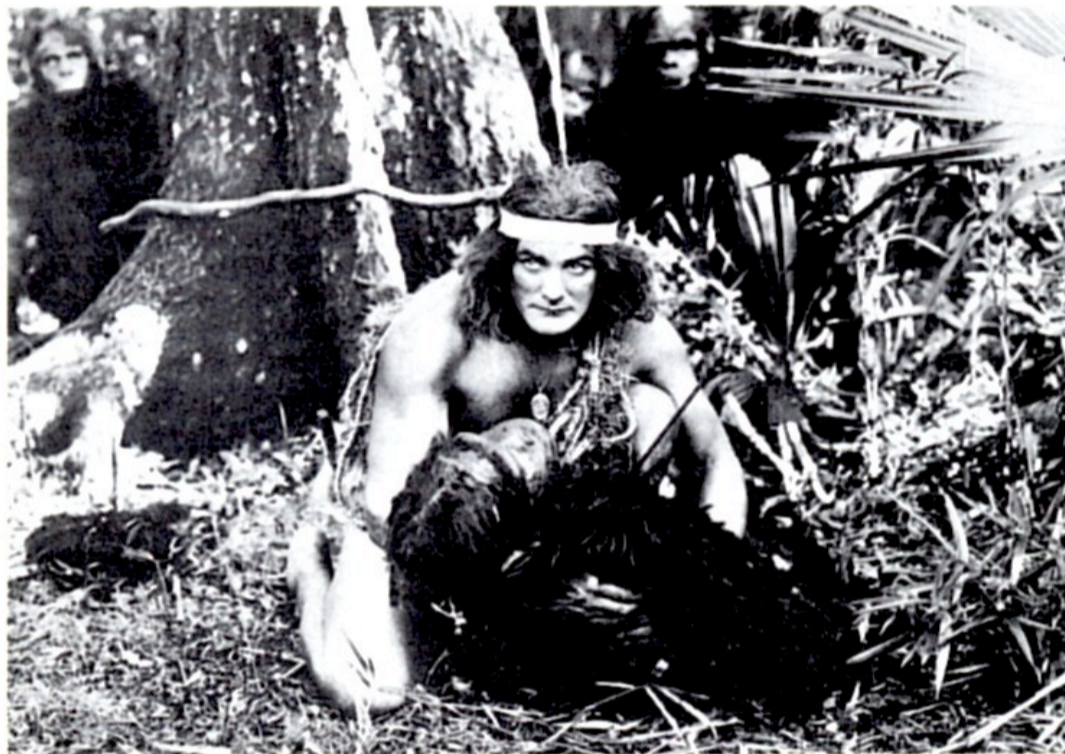
The science fiction writer founded a merchandising empire on his popular mass market fantasy hero.

By Scott Tracy Griffin

In years past, Walt Disney Studios created original concepts or adapted classic fairy tales for their animated feature films. With the acquisition of the Tarzan license, Disney seeks to resurrect an 87-year-old franchise that was once a marketing powerhouse in its own right.

Though Tarzan has been barely a blip on the cultural radar for over two decades, it wasn't always so. In the first half of the 20th century, Tarzan was a multimedia phenomenon, appearing in pulp magazines, novels, films, newspaper comic strips, radio programs, comic books, games, and used to endorse products as diverse as gasoline and bread. The Tarzan media saturation occurred in the decades predating the Davy Crockett coonskin cap craze of the 1950s, considered by many to be the birth of the era of Hollywood mass-merchandising.

As with Mickey Mouse and Superman, Tarzan is the product of one man's genius. Edgar Rice Burroughs, a novice writer, created the legendary character for his third novel after his premiere effort, *Under the Moons of Mars* (later retitled *A Princess of Mars*), proved a hit with the readers of the pulp magazine *All-Story*. After Burroughs' sophomore slump (the medieval adventure *The Outlaw of Torn*) failed to sell, the author decided to explore nature versus nurture, civilization versus the primitive, and a host of intriguing concepts pioneered by Charles Dar-



Elmo Lincoln as the first screen Tarzan, with Kala his ape mother, in the 1918 silent *TARZAN OF THE APES*, the first film to earn boxoffice over \$1 million.

win, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and others.

Tarzan of the Apes, the ape man's origin story debuted in *All-Story Magazine* complete in one issue, October 1912. The response was a resounding clamor from readers for more of the wild man. Newspapers serialized the story and it was soon followed with a sequel, *The Return of Tarzan*, which sealed Tarzan's popularity and Burroughs' fledgling writing career.

Though literati disdained Burroughs, he was a tremendously successful writer in commercial terms; millions of his books having been sold in more than 30 languages. Whatever Burroughs lacked in writing ability, his imaginative story-telling abilities more than compensated. He was able to spin page-turning adventure yarns suffused with humor, philosophy and socio-political musings.

Burroughs' imaginative

worlds were fueled not only by his inquisitive mind, with which he kept abreast of current events and scientific developments, but also by his own diverse experiences. Born September 1, 1875, Burroughs was able to experience the final days of the Western frontier, working as a cowpoke, miner, and cavalry soldier. Burroughs was the fifth of six sons born to well-to-do Chicago businessman George Tyler Burroughs and his wife Mary Evaline. Burroughs worked at his brothers' cattle ranch in Idaho and attended Michigan's Orchard Lake Military Academy, but failed the entrance exam to West Point. After a stint in the U. S. Cavalry, he married his childhood sweetheart, Emma Centennia Hulbert, and joined his brothers in Idaho to dredge for gold.

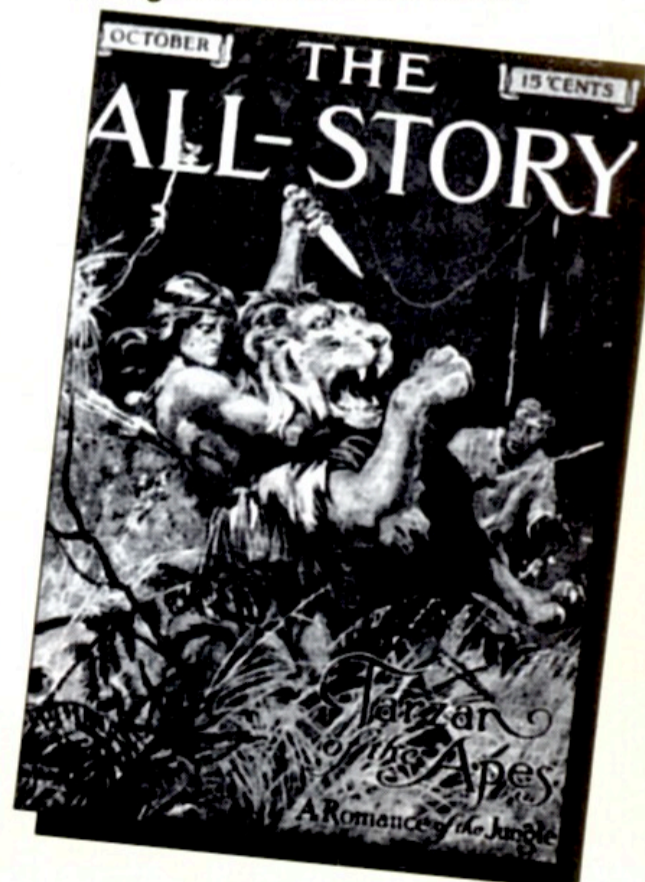
The Burroughs brothers soon returned to Chicago, but Ed and Emma first sought their fortune in Salt Lake City, where Bur-

roughs worked as a railroad bull. It didn't take long before they moved back to Chicago and a succession of soulless odd jobs. Two children, Joan and Hulbert, were born, and the family's straits became so dire that Ed was forced to hock Emma's jewelry to buy food.

Finally, Burroughs reached nadir, attempting to hawk pencil sharpeners via a staff of ineffective door-to-door-salesman. Inspiration struck when he was sitting in his office, flipping through pulp magazines to check the placement of his ads. Scanning the far-fetched tales, Burroughs determined, "If people were paid for writing such rot as I read, I could write stories just as rotten."

Inspired by astronomer Percival Lowell's theories that the Martian canals (actually an optical illusion) were engineered

Tarzan's October 1912 pulp novel debut made Burroughs fledgling writing career an instant success.



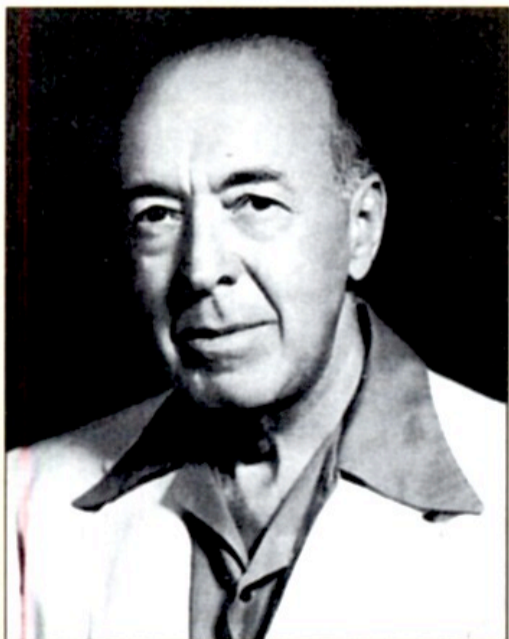
by intelligent life, Burroughs wrote *Under the Moons of Mars* on the backs of old envelopes and letterhead, and sold it to *All Story* editor Thomas Newell Metcalf for the princely sum of \$400, about six months' salary at Ed's day job.

The Martian series of 11 novels was launched, and proved even more imaginative and entertaining than the Tarzan novels. The Martian series protagonist, John Carter, is mystically spirited to the Red Planet where he saves a beautiful Martian princess from rampaging monsters, green barbarians, and marriage to a cruel dictator; further adventures proved as harrowing and immensely readable. Burroughs' science fiction predicted things such as autopilots, smart bombs, fax machines, organ transplants, and many other formerly unbelievable concepts, earning him the sobriquet, "The Grandfather of American Science Fiction."

During his early, prolific period, Burroughs wrote in a number of genres and created a variety of alien worlds, with such exotic names as Caspak, Vanah, and Pellucidar. Finances forced him to return repeatedly to Tarzan, however, and he eventually settled down to an alternating schedule, writing one Tarzan novel and one in another genre each year. The end result was 24 Tarzan novels and roughly 50 additional lesser-known works.

TARZAN OF THE APES debuted as a silent feature film starring Elmo Lincoln in 1918, and was one of the first six films to earn over \$1 million dollars at the boxoffice. A prof-

Burroughs turned to writing science fiction and fantasy after a string of business and career failures.



EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

"Inspiration struck when he was flipping through pulp magazines to check the placement of his ads. 'If people were payed for such rot as I read, I could write stories just as rotten.'"



Olympic swimmer Johnny Weissmuller as Tarzan with Cheetah and Maureen O'Sullivan as Jane in MGM's 1932 lavishly budgeted TARZAN, THE APE MAN.

itable quickie sequel, THE ROMANCE OF TARZAN, was produced, and the race to cash in on Tarzan's image began in earnest.

Wishing to be closer to the motion picture industry, Burroughs purchased *Los Angeles Times* publisher Harrison Gray Otis' ranch in 1919 and renamed it Tarzana. Unable to profit as a gentleman farmer, Burroughs broke it into residential lots which were eventually incorporated as the city of Tarzana in the West San Fernando Valley.

Though four successful silent films and four highly profitable serials had been released, it took the combined might of a major studio and an Olympic champion to bring Tarzan's popularity to full blossom. Following the critical and commercial success of the African adventure film TRADER HORN (1931), MGM studios acquired the Tarzan property for exploitation in TARZAN, THE APE MAN (1932), starring five-time gold medalist Johnny Weissmuller as the apeman.

The movie, which co-starred Maureen O'Sullivan as Jane, was a big-budget spectacular that combined action, mystery,

adventure, and romance in one blockbusting package. Ape Man was critically acclaimed and a boxoffice smash.

When Ape Man debuted, the Sunday Tarzan comics illustrated by Hal Foster were just hitting their stride, and the first pre-recorded radio program, starring Jim Pierce as Tarzan, was also gaining popularity. Toys, games, and other endorsements quickly followed, and a modern myth was made.

Though Ape Man changed Burroughs' financial fortunes forever, there was a downside. Burroughs' intelligent, articulate, multi-lingual British lord was recast as a noble but ignorant savage who spoke broken English and displayed a profound if charming naivete in the face of the encroaching civilized safari parties that invaded his jungle.

MGM threw even more money and effort into the sequel, TARZAN AND HIS MATE (1934), and their investment paid rich dividends. Mate ratcheted up the action with battling rhinos, lions, and savage tribesmen requiring even greater heroics of the savage protagonist.

MGM's series stumbled creatively with the third entry, TARZAN ESCAPES (1936). Originally titled THE CAPTURE OF TARZAN, the film was reshot when graphic scenes of giant devil bats proved too frightening for children. The film still did great business, but the game of "musical director's chairs" proved its creative undoing. Tarzan was now firmly geared toward children, a decision that Burroughs regretted, but accepted as he cashed the huge licensing checks.

It was ironic that the series became identified as a children's property, since the original tale was rife with cannibalism, revenge murder and other graphic violent acts popular in the lurid pulp market. Burroughs remained puritanically chaste in his attitude towards sex, though there was plenty of latent sexual imagery and tension in his tales.

Tarzan movies continued to be released almost yearly until the 1970s, with 20 actors essaying the role in more than 40 films and four television series. Burroughs remained active throughout middle age, riding horses, playing tennis, and earning his pilot's license at age 58. He divorced Emma and married Florence Dearholt, an actress nearly half his age. He and Florence relocated to Hawaii, where his literary output began to slow. After witnessing the bombing of Pearl Harbor and becoming World War II's oldest war correspondent, Ed returned to Tarzana for his final years. He died in bed reading the Tarzan Sunday comics on March 19, 1950.

Burroughs' legacy was to reach even greater posthumous heights. In an astute business move, Burroughs had trademarked the name "Tarzan" assuring his descendants ownership of the apeman even after the novels went into public domain. Edgar Rice Burroughs, Incorporated continues to license products out of Ed's former offices on Ventura Boulevard in Tarzana, with Danton Burroughs, son of Ed's third child, John Coleman, helming the company's efforts. Walt Disney's TARZAN promises to bring a new era of prosperity to the literary son of "The Wizard of Tarzana." □

ing this inner voice. It's really an interesting way to deal with the music."

Collins' songs in *TARZAN* include "Two Worlds," which opens the film, "You'll Be In My Heart," which serves as Kala's lullaby to baby Tarzan, "Son of Man," which plays over a montage of Tarzan growing up, "Trashin' the Camp," a scat song, sung by Terk/Rosie O'Donnell (the only number Collins doesn't sing) and "Strangers Like Me," which plays over a scene in which the humans teach Tarzan about civilization.

Just as music plays a vital role in how *TARZAN* bucks the traditional animated formula, so does another of the film's exciting dynamics. Both directors gave the animators on the film more freedom to explore character's emotions than in past features, which according to some, like Surrey, was the equivalent of ripping off a partially buttoned straight jacket. "We have longer scenes in this film," he said, adding, "Which is great, because it gives you a chance for more character development. I think people are going to get more character moments from this film, as opposed to 'cut, cut, cut, action sequence, song.' It'll be about the character and you'll get to know them and like them."

Best of all, this element of *TARZAN* may help audiences appreciate the unique artistry, emotion and talent that goes into crafting an animated character. Or, as Russ Edmonds put it, "Animation means learning the techniques and then forgetting it all and going from the heart." □

Clayton and the absent-minded Professor Porter, voiced by Nigel Hawthorne (below) who provided the character with endearing warmth.



Tarzan, voiced by Tony Goldwyn (inset), who gave the ape-man an animal quality with low register line readings that helped animation master Glen Keane define the character.



Jane's jungle innocent was voiced by Minnie Driver (inset) whose physical mannerisms during recording helped animator Ken Duncan refine the movements of his leading lady.



WILD WII

Behind-the-scenes of the reinvention of the

By Frederick C. Szebin

While '60s retreads have had uneven success at the boxoffice, it appears as though the updating of CBS's old hit *WILD WILD WEST* may be the beacon of class and profit studios have been looking for. With a budget of around \$100 million, star power and a director with an impressive track record, *WWW* may be powerful enough to draw some eyes away from even *STAR WARS*.

The fantasy-western's trail to the big screen began in the 1980s with a script by screenwriting team Brent Maddock and Steve Wilson (*SHORT CIRCUIT*, *TREMORS*). After making the rounds, it ended up at the doorstep of director Barry Sonnenfeld, who had *MEN IN BLACK* to his credit. Eventually the writing team of Peter S. Seaman and Jeffrey Price

Shakespearean Kenneth Branagh as Dr. Arliss Loveless, out to punish the North for winning the Civil War.



(*WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT*) took a crack at adapting a western that owed more to Jules Verne than John Ford.

"*MEN IN BLACK* is like a half hour episode of *I LOVE LUCY* compared to this," said Sonnenfeld. "It is miserable to work on something of this size, with neediness for every single shot. There was one day where it was just three people talking, and we picked up two days ahead of schedule on that scene because finally there was a scene where we weren't pulling someone on a wire, or there wasn't steam billowing, or this didn't flip, or that didn't fall, or this didn't crash."

The very scale of *WILD WILD WEST* necessitated half a year of filming on Hollywood stages and on locations throughout the southwest. Along with designer Bo Welch, Sonnenfeld surrounded himself with Academy Award-winning costume designer Debora Lee Scott (*TITANIC*), special effects supervisor Michael Lantieri, Industrial Light and Magic's CGI department, composer Elmer Bernstein, Oscar-winning makeup artist Rick Baker (*MIB*, *AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON*), and a cast of no small repute.

Will Smith does his second film in a row with Sonnenfeld, surprising everyone—including himself—in being cast as leading man James West, played on the small screen by Robert Conrad. Academy Award-winner Kevin Kline (*A FISH CALLED WANDA*) picks up the late Ross Martin's mantle as master of disguise Artemus Gordon, as well as playing President Grant, with villains General McGrath and Arliss Loveless brought to life by *SILENCE OF THE LAMB*'s serial killer Ted Levine, and British Shakespeare lover Kenneth Branagh,



Will Smith stars as agent Jim West, with Kevin Kline as master of disguise Artemus Gordon, facing the threat of Loveless' mechanized Tarantula war machine, the TV fantasy rendered in epic proportions.

LD WEST

'60s TV show as summer movie eye candy.



respectively. Salma Hayek (*FROM DUSK TILL DAWN*) is a sort of love interest Rita Escobar, with Musetta Vander (*MORTAL KOMBAT: ANNIHILATION*), Bai Ling (*RED CORNER*), Frederique van der Wal (54) and newcomer Sofia Eng playing Loveless' special forces, each have their own specialty to help their leader take over the world.

Cast and crew unanimously praised the original TV series that set James Bond-ian secret agents loose against evil forces each week from 1965 to 1969. A major departure is the casting of a black man in the role created by a white man during a time in our history when African Americans weren't treated to civil service work. Sonnenfeld didn't see a problem with that bit of historical finagling.

"When we decided to hire Will to play Jim West, we had to decide if we wanted to deal with the fact that he was a black man," said Sonnenfeld. "We felt that given the time it was taking place, right after the Civil War, we could use it as a tool for the movie. Part of the reason that Jim West is on this assignment is because he's after General McGrath, who was an evil man during the Civil War."

Joked Smith, "You know, it's subtle, but there's a difference between myself and Robert Conrad." Noted Smith about Sonnenfeld's reaction, "Barry just said, 'Oh, no one cares that you're black! [Smith laughed.] Just come on. I don't want to work with anyone but you.' We talked about it, and that's what's brilliant about Barry's filmmaking sensibilities. Everything is just slightly off-center enough to make it new, fun and interesting. I thought this project was great because it's a western, but it's not really a western; we maintain the period with the

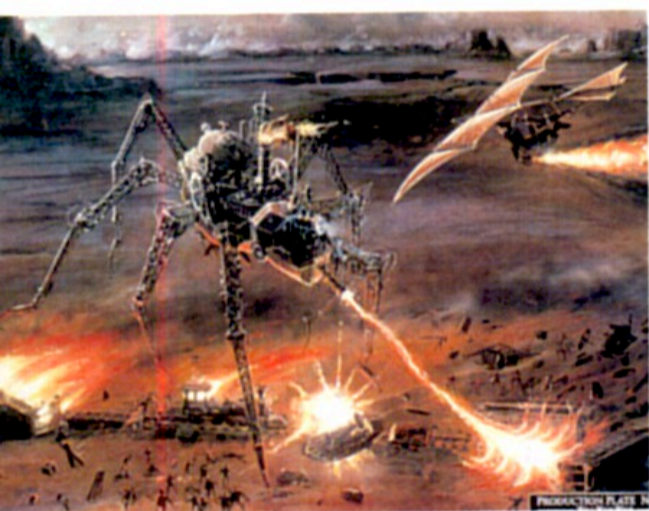
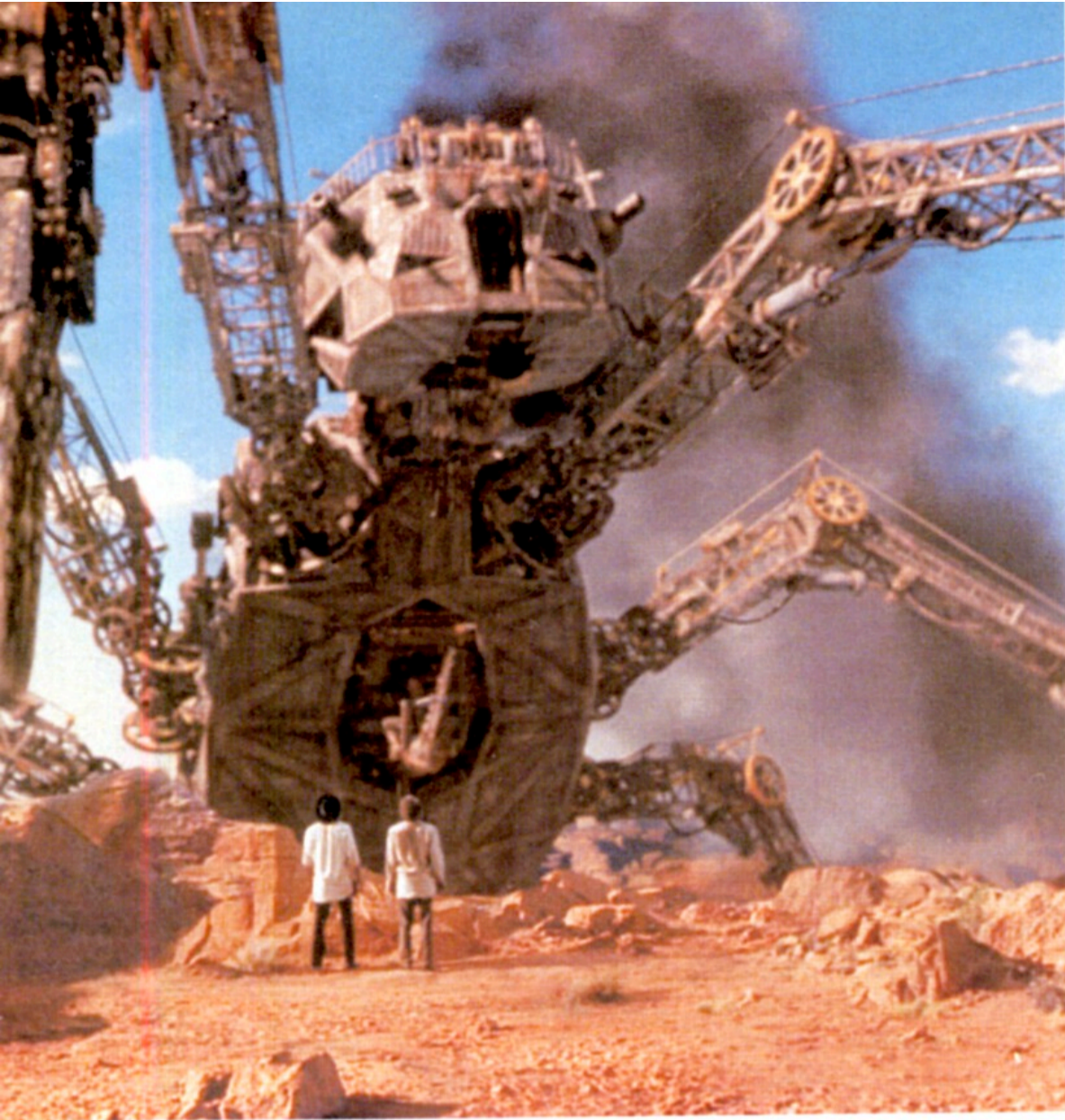
wardrobe, the dialects and all of that, but it's fun, young, new and hip and *alla dat stuff*."

To create the special world of the script, effects are used to enhance the look of an 1860s that never quite existed. In the world of *WWW*, arachnid mechanoids wreak havoc on American towns; steam-driven wheelchairs house the upper portions of a wily madman; and while the rest of the world is at the precipice of the Industrial Age, the characters of *WILD WILD WEST* have conquered and surpassed it with subtle cleverness and histrionic hubris. Much of the credit goes to Bo Welch and special effects supervisor Michael Lantieri and their crews, but what couldn't be built was realized through the CGI of Eric Brevig and ILM.

"Believe it or not," said Sonnenfeld, "the amount of computer graphics and visual effects

Salma Hayek as Rita Escobar, snatched by Loveless for his harem, complicating matters for West.





CGI effects by ILM (above) bring to startling life Bo Welch's ambitious production design concept (left) of Loveless' Tarantula war machine.

“It’s like doing commercials where you spend hours deciding if the drops falling off the Sprite can should go slower or faster...at some point you don’t care anymore.”

if it’s blue screen or computers, 2D or 3D animation. Then, many months later I’ve shot all the enjoyable stuff, which are actually scenes where people sit around and talk and are funny and amusing, and by the last month of the shoot [November, 1998] we basically were on blue screen stages.

“The problem with that is we’re done with repartee. We’re done with two people talking, and now we’re doing individual shots, and you never know if it’s working or not. At the end of the day you’ll have a minute and a half of film of a guy looking up at a blue screen, pretending there’s an airplane flying at them, which has not even been invented yet, so you spend a month doing that, and that’s how you end the movie, and that’s why at the end of the movie you’re so depressed. You think, ‘I have no movie. I have a whole bunch of shots, but does it work? When a character said something on the set six months ago, does that reaction still work? Maybe I should have done this, but I can’t reshoot. You literally have all these little pieces that you have to remember from eight months ago when you did these drawings with a storyboard artist; it was good then, trust your judgment; and that’s a very dreary, boring

way to work. It’s like doing commercials where you spend hours deciding if the drops falling off the Sprite can should drop slower or faster and, at some point, you don’t care anymore. That’s the way I feel about this movie. And then what happens is, in post-production, you see that it’s working and then you go, ‘Oh, I care again.’ But there’s that long dreary month of just staring at blue.

“Post-production on these CGI movies is actually difficult because you think that you’ll be able to make all these changes,” said Sonnenfeld, “and if you think it should walk faster, it can. But you’ve already designed walk cycles, and if you want it to walk 30% faster, there’s going to be a \$72,000 charge because they have to re-program the CGI computer. In the case of MEN IN BLACK, it was particularly difficult because we had basically a performance, and I was directing a bunch of guys up at ILM in how to be funny. WILD WILD WEST has presented the same sort of problem in that the Tarantula has to have a character about it. Even though it’s mechanical, it has to feel somehow human or bug-like. Luckily we’ve gotten a big jump on it and ILM has already shown me what are called ‘walk cycles,’ but you really end up being fixed at what you decided to do in pre-production. There’s very little you can change in post, given the post-production schedule and the limited budget. You can’t just say, ‘Why don’t we make it 20% bigger.’ ‘Oh really? Then we’re gonna have to re-scale it because now we need a higher resolution!’ Any change at the post-production point will cause problems.”

Along with the effects used to create the wonders of 19th-century super science are the props and settings West and

continued on page 39

actors in order to make Brevig’s job a little easier months later. This kind of collaboration is not lost on the director, whose secret to success in such an endeavor is planning, planning and more planning.

“These kind of movies are all about pre-production,” said Sonnenfeld. “I had to storyboard this movie, if for no other reason, so we could budget it in February, 1998. This movie has basically been finished in my head and through drawings since then, when I had to do it on paper, drawing every single frame of the movie. ILM takes those drawings, figures out how to shoot them, what it will cost

Production designer Bo Welch (l) confers on the set with director Barry Sonnenfeld, who predicted the talented designer would soon turn to directing.



work on WILD WILD WEST is substantially more than in MEN IN BLACK. The entire 80-foot Tarantula built by Loveless is being done for the most part in the computer. Those scenes keep getting bigger and bigger. Our visual effects supervisor, Eric Brevig, did MEN IN BLACK. At one point, he wasn’t going to be available for this job and I took it way from ILM. I said, ‘I’ll go to another place if I can’t get Eric,’ because Eric is a true filmmaker. He’s not just a guy who says, ‘Let’s have a bigger explosion.’ He really thinks about story points and what’s best for the movie, and not what will make the neatest shot. And I view him as a collaborator, the same way I view Bo Welch, Graham Place and [executive producer] Jon Peters. He’s just really smart and funny.”

As the director of such a project, Sonnenfeld has to take certain things into consideration on his set with his flesh and blood

WILD WILD WEST

BARRY SONNENFELD

The director of MEN IN BLACK on the angst of his latest painstaking foray into effects-laden fantasy.

By Dale Kutzera

After the wildly macabre update of *THE ADDAM'S FAMILY*, and the big-budget spectacle of *MEN IN BLACK*, director Barry Sonnenfeld vowed he would never make a visual effects film again. Yet in October of 1998, in the home-stretch of a long 115-day shooting schedule on *WILD WILD WEST*, the compact, effusive director found himself waiting for yet another physical effect. "Will Smith and Kevin Kline, who play James West and Artemus Gordon, invent the world's first airplane out of a bicycle that Kevin adds a motor to," he explained. "The bad guys, led by Kenneth Branagh, who plays (Dr. Arliss) Loveless, has shot them down, so they are about to crash land into the head of this 80-foot tarantula that Loveless has built."

The particular sequence, shot before a giant green-screen, involves stand-ins for stars Smith and Kline suspended on a makeshift bike-plane that "flies" with the help of cables and harnesses. It is slow, tedious filmmaking, dominated by effects technicians who struggle to realize shots that were storyboarded months in advance. Sonnenfeld readily admitted he prefers the smaller scale of *GET SHORTY*, and, increasingly the creative immediacy of television, where he executive produced the summer-series *MAXIMUM BOB*, and resurrected the 1970s hit *FANTASY ISLAND*. "Each time I direct a movie like this I vow I'll never do one again. The schedule on most movies is 60 days so this is like doing two movies. I'm slowly getting through the days one step at a



Sonnenfeld surrounded by his *WILD WILD WEST* collaborators, Will Smith as agent James West, producer Jon Peters and Kevin Kline as Artemus Gordon.

time. This movie has so many more physical stunts than *MEN IN BLACK*. It's all about stunts and gadgets and pool tables that flip upside-down, and things that come out of the roof. There are days when we get only three set-ups, which isn't much."

Sonnenfeld began his career in New York shooting commercial and industrial films. After a fortuitous meeting with fellow NYU alumni Joel and Ethan Coen at a party, he served as cameraman on a short trailer for their film, *BLOOD SIMPLE*. The Coens spent a year showing the trailer to various donors and

raising funds to actually shoot the film. "The first day on *BLOOD SIMPLE* was the first day Joel, Ethan and I had ever been on a feature movie set," Sonnenfeld recalled. "I had never seen a 35mm camera before. I had the assistant bring it over the night before to show me where the on/off button was."

The stylish success of *BLOOD SIMPLE* garnered Sonnenfeld work as the director of photography on such visually dynamic films as *RAISING ARIZONA*, *THREE O'CLOCK HIGH*, *BIG*, *WHEN HARRY*

MET SALLY and *MISERY*. He was perfectly content working as a cinematographer, or, as he calls it "a friend of the director." All that came to an end when producer Scott Rudin convinced him to direct *THE ADDAM'S FAMILY*. "I had no interest in directing and he just made me," Sonnenfeld said. "He wouldn't take no for an answer, try as I might."

Sonnenfeld easily adapted to the job, which he described as a process of answering hundreds of questions every day. "Here's what directing is," he said. "It's having opinions about everything and it's an accumulation of thousands of tiny little decisions like where do you want the holes in the wings (of the bike-plane) and how long do you want the barrel of the guns, and what color do you want this, and how do you want me to say this line. It's an accumulation of tiny little decisions that add up a tone, and the single most important thing a director does from the time he gets a script written, is consistency of tone—finding what tone the film should be, then making all those decisions based on that. It's sort of an unconscious thing. I don't believe I'm the author of a movie so much as the parent."

The success of the *ADDAM'S FAMILY* led to *FOR LOVE OR MONEY*, *ADDAM'S FAMILY VALUES*, *GET SHORTY*, and *MEN IN BLACK*. It was during the release for *MEN IN BLACK* that Sonnenfeld learned of *WILD WILD WEST*. "James Lassiter, Will's partner, and I were having a meeting at Sony to discuss publicity for *MEN IN BLACK*, and at the end of the meeting James said there's a script for

WILD WILD WEST that Jon Peters has and it would be great for you and Will to do together," Sonnenfeld said. "WILD WILD WEST was one of my favorite shows growing up. It was like James Bond in 1869 with all those great gadgets and women with large breasts. There was a babe on every episode, so I watched it every week with my Dad. I read the script and then Jon and I had to convince Warner Bros. to go with Will, but it wasn't too hard."

The casting of Smith in the role Robert Conrad made famous required some modest revisions to the script. The backstory to the James West character now involves the murder of his family during the Civil War and a years-long search for those responsible. West will encounter some racism in the film to acknowledge the tone of 1869 America. "To me, the challenge is to take something that existed in the culture and find a way to make it hip and different," explained Sonnenfeld. "Since I always loved this show, I thought how great it would be to cast Will Smith, who turns anything into a hip, smart, funny thing."

With Smith attached as James West, the search began for his sidekick, the master of disguises Artemus Gordon, and the arch villain Arliss Loveless.

After working together on MEN IN BLACK, Sonnenfeld courted Smith as his unlikely casting choice for West.



"The nature and tone of the comedies I try to make," said Sonnenfeld, "is to try to let the audience decide what's funny...I like everyone to underplay the comedy."



Sonnenfeld rehearses an action take with Smith. The director likened the slow pace of the six months of effects filming to making two movies back-to-back.

George Clooney, who had also grown up watching the macho series, was initially cast. "George always wanted to be Jim West, but I had already decided on Will and that was the way I wanted to go," Sonnenfeld explained, "but George wanted to do the movie and work with me, and I wanted to work with him, so we had a rewrite that I felt really helped Artemus' character. I remember speaking to [George] Thanksgiving morning and he was very disappointed. What it came down to—and we talked for several hours—is that ultimately he wouldn't be happy unless he was Jim West. What he was trying to do was make Artemus more action [oriented]. He kept saying, 'Will has these action beats in the first 20 pages and I don't.' I would say, 'All Will gets to do is hit people and ride on a horse. You get to wear a dress and pretend you're a woman, so in some ways you get to have more acting.' We both realized it was just not the role he wanted, so it was a very relaxed and happy decision we both made."

Clooney went on to star in the film OUT OF SIGHT that

Sonnenfeld executive produced and at one time considered directing (it was ultimately directed by Steven Soderbergh). The role of Artemus went to Kevin Kline, whose track record of comedy seemed tailor-made for the part. "Kevin is such a consummate physical actor from PIRATES OF PENZANCE and on," said Sonnenfeld. "Artemus is theatrical and always uses disguises. We have Kevin dressed as a woman, as a mountain man, and pretending to be President Ulysses S. Grant."

In the television series, Dr. Loveless was portrayed by the actor Michael Dunn, a little person. While the original drafts of the scripts also described Loveless as a little person, Peters and Sonnenfeld decided early in the casting process not to limit the talent pool to actors of small stature. In particular, they hoped for an English actor, someone with the theatrical presence to equal that of Smith and Kline.

"I was concerned a little bit, because Kevin and Will needed an adversary who was as strong an actor as we could have," explained Sonnenfeld. "[Loveless] is a southern gentlemen who is still angry that the South

lost the war and he's trying to take over the U.S. The nature of this bad guy is that he's very theatrical, and the great thing about British actors is that they can be very theatrical, but very real at the same time and not be jokey or wink at the camera. So I knew I wanted a British actor for the bad guy. Kenneth [Branagh] read the script and he wanted to do a movie that was perceived as an American summer movie and this one was available. We decided that we would cut his legs off so he has this wheelchair, and he's surrounded by beautiful women, so he's very frustrated."

WILD WILD WEST was originally penned by the team of Brent Wilson and S. S. Maddox (TREMORS). Sonnenfeld also wanted to place his own stamp on the project and brought in the team of Jeffrey Price and Peter S. Seaman (WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT, DOC HOLLYWOOD). One objective was to maintain the level of comedy, while at the same time not being overtly comedic.

"My feelings about comedies is that you don't want two funny people in a comedy. You need a straight man. You need Gracy Allen and George Burns, Abbot and Costello, so in this movie Kevin is more the comedian and Will is the handsome, heroic straight man. We call him the Tommy Lee Jones of the show. That isn't to say he's not terribly funny in the movie, but he isn't trying to be funny. The nature and tone of the comedies I try to make, whether it is GET SHORTY or MEN IN BLACK or THE ADDAMS FAMILY is to try to let the audience decide what's funny, instead of having someone say punch lines. I like everyone to underplay the comedy. Will and I both agreed he shouldn't be the guy with the punch line."

In an unusually inclusive move, Sonnenfeld and Peters brought the principal actors in to work with the writers in brainstorming a new direction for the script. "Directing is casting and if you have a good script and cast it properly, you're 90% done," said Sonnenfeld. "All you can do is either screw it up or make it slightly better. I'm working

with really smart people. I remember the writers were concerned that I brought Will and Kevin and Kenneth into the process early. We rehearsed for a couple weeks with the writers and threw out ideas. Will was concerned that [West's] strength and [Artemus'] strength shouldn't co-exist at all. They should each be half a man. [West] is totally a man of action who does no planning or thinking and [Artemus] avoids physical violence, is all about planning and doesn't do anything spontaneously.

"If there was ever a scene where one could do the other man's work, Will would try to think it through and see if there was another way to do that. And Kevin totally agreed. If they could do what the other guy did, then they didn't need each other. We wanted a very strong dichotomy between these two guys. Kenneth is also very literate and he's a director and was also coming up with ideas about words and speech patterns. I'm going to get all the credit anyway, so I encouraged a very open attitude. I often asked [visual effects supervisor] Eric Brevig to talk about things that have nothing to do with the effects, because I trust him as a filmmaker and like to get other opinions."

One of the smart people Sonnenfeld brought onto the project was production designer Bo Welch, who earned an Academy Award nomination for his work on *MEN IN BLACK*. For *WILD WILD WEST*, Welch created a rich Victorian world of steam-driven fantasy. Sonnenfeld appreciated the consistent visual style that Welch brought to all of *Loveless'* nefarious mechanical contraptions, many employing a spider-theme.

"The secret of directing is to surround yourself with people who are better than you are," admitted Sonnenfeld, "because at the end of the day I'm going to get all the credit, so why not get the best people possible. In the case of Bo we talked a lot and he did drawings and they were always brilliant. The great thing about Bo is he picks a design concept and the whole movie follows through. For instance, Bo and I love the color green



Sonnenfeld, an avowed fan of the '60s TV show in his youth, directs Smith as West, ever the ladies' man.

and if you saw *THE LITTLE PRINCESS*, which he designed, everything from the uniforms to the walls is green. There is a lot of green in this movie. You'll also see these things that look like two balls on triangles, [called] governors. And throughout the movie you'll see them wherever *Loveless* has anything, whether it is the spider or the tank, Bo follows through on the visual thematics."

One such device is a fiendishly inventive restraining system that *Loveless* uses to prevent his captive scientists from escaping. Each person is fitted with a giant magnetic collar. If anyone tries to leave a proscribed area, a giant spinning blade is launched from a steam-driven catapult. The blade is drawn to the magnet with head-spinning results. "At one point Will and Kevin are in a cornfield wearing these collars and Bo had drawn a beautiful disc launcher, but it was four feet long, and I said I wanted the blades to be that big." A larger launcher was designed.

Another important collaborator on the project is composer Elmer Bernstein, famed for creating the stirring music for *THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN*, *THE TEN COMMANDMENTS*, *THE GREAT ESCAPE* and scores of other films. "We'll use the *WILD WILD WEST* music," said Sonnenfeld of the

memorable TV theme, "in the same way we did in *THE ADAMS FAMILY*. Elmer is great. He's done comedies and lots of westerns and we wanted to add something unique to this. As I told Danny Elfman when he started writing the music for *MEN IN BLACK*, I said 'Don't help me with the comedy, help me make the movie more manly.' It's the same with this. I want it to feel manly, Aaron Copeland-like, but also hipper."

Sonnenfeld sees a potential for more *WILD WILD WEST* films, following West and Gordon on further adventures. This is in sharp contrast to the slim chances he gives for a sequel to *MEN IN BLACK*. "It's been talked about, but the problem with *MEN IN BLACK* is financial," said Sonnenfeld with a touch of exasperation. "It's practically financially impossible to do with me and Will and Tommy and [executive producer] Steven Spielberg. Steven has so much of the back end of the movie that it's a little bit hard for there to be any money for anyone else. Together we [four] represent more than 100% of the gross, so for every \$100 million Sony makes at the box-office, they would have to pay like \$105 million and hope they make it up in toys. So I'm predicting there will be a *MEN IN BLACK* sequel and it will be

produced by Steve and it will star Martin Sheen and Chris Rock and be directed by Brad Silberling and I think it will be a wonderful movie."

Kidding aside, Sonnenfeld did recount an intriguing idea for a sequel offered by Will Smith. "To do a sequel for *MEN IN BLACK*, you'd have to totally reinvent the idea. What you don't want to do is pick a new alien that is coming to attack earth, because then the jokes feel old. Will has a great idea which is basically the *Men in Black* headquarters is wiped out and everyone is dead but Will. He has to go and recruit Tommy, who has been neutralized, and he doesn't tell Tommy he was ever an agent. So Tommy is a rookie and Will is the old timer."

"For me, *WILD WILD WEST* works not because of the 80-foot Tarantula," he concluded. "What makes the movie work is ultimately the relationship between the people. If you look at *MEN IN BLACK*, you have a very small movie with some smoke and mirrors. It was about Tommy and Will. And this one is also about the actors. There are a lot of stunts and the train does a billion things and is going to be fantastic, but I think what will make the movie work is the relationship and comedy between Kevin, Will, and Kenneth." □

WILD WILD WEST

COSTUME DESIGN

TITANIC designer Debora Lee Scott on dressing the cast of Sonnenfeld's western fantasy in style.

By Frederick C. Szebin

The last time Debora Lee Scott's wardrobe designs appeared in a film, that picture set records around the world and became the legendary *TITANIC*. Although a period piece, the mood of her current assignment—dressing up the ladies and gentlemen of *WILD WILD WEST*—is definitely less somber, as Scott points out.

"The challenge of this movie was really approaching it from not only a period point of view, but from a comedic point of view as well, and that's something I had never really done before because the period films that I've done have mostly been very serious. *WILD WILD WEST* gave me license to think about approaching the subject in a much more open-minded fashion, and that was really a great thing, being able to think, 'Hmm, now what could I do with this?'"

Like so many of her age group involved with this feature version of the beloved 1960s TV series, Scott enjoyed the show, then as a young teenage baby-sitter whose vocation coincided with the network airing of the popular fantasy western. "I remember everything about the television, the den, the whole setting," she recalls of the home she tended at the time. "I remember nothing about the children that I baby-sat for," she laughed, "so I was obviously very attentive to the show."

Clothes not only make the man (and woman) in movies, but many times the person wearing the threads bring their own attitude and aesthetic to it. Will Smith, noted Scott, certainly wears it all very well.

"Will's character, James West, has two different looks in the film," she said. "Within that we play with a little range of color and texture. Will brought the whole thing to life because when we first designed his costume, it looked great in the sketch. I thought, 'That's a nice thing to put somebody in.' When Will first put it on everyone just went, 'Wow! He looks—he's



Scott's design sketch for Will Smith (inset) who "made the wardrobe come to life," said Scott. "He has an incredible sex appeal."

so cool!' He's just amazing. He makes the whole wardrobe come to life. He has an amazing charisma, an incredible sort of sex appeal when you're around him, and when you feel that from someone, you respond positively to the clothes, but it's really mostly him."

For West's partner in super spying, Artemus Gordon, Scott followed director Barry Sonnenfeld's feeling that Gordon should have a more European or British style, but being careful not to make him look like a dandy looking good in the

desert dust. "Artemus just likes to dress," Scott said. "And we tried to bring a little bit more color into his clothes, and a lot more style and sophistication, and to follow the etiquette of the period more closely as to what a gentleman would wear. You never see him in the same thing twice."

Another character who got a more traditional treatment was President Ulysses S. Grant, whose look was designed to be rather more straightforward than the colorful adventurers he employs. Not traditional in the least is villain Arliss Loveless (Kenneth Branagh), a purely fanciful creation of Industrial Age mechanics and classic megalomaniacal evil who, despite his beating Steve Austin to bio-mechanics by over 100 years, finds his fashion sense deeply rooted in historical figures with similar designs of conquest in mind.

"I looked at a lot of historical characters," said Scott of her search for Loveless's look, "and the two that really stuck with me were a version of Napoleon and Custer mixed together, taking the craziness of both and then making Loveless' wardrobe a combination of reality, then pushing it almost 150 years in style before the actual date of the movie."

"I could have approached a movie like this in a very straight forward way if it had called for that," Scott continued. "But for me, the challenge of the design was really to take the styles to another place. A character like Loveless, for instance; how would you do that guy straight? It would be a very somber, boring kind of period look, so you sort of have to move it around a lot."

"The women who follow him around are completely out there. There is Munitia [Musetta Vander], who is a weapons expert, so we chose to make her a pirate because that's something that you could do fancifully, but also have weapons associated with the look. Amazonia [Frederique van der Wal] wears a Wagnerian opera motif, and Miss East's [Bia Ling] look was very specifically guided by the script. It was decided that she was going to be a dragon lady, that she had to be covered up



Loveless' harem, the Loveless Lovelles: Musetta Vander, Frederique van der Wal, Bai Ling and Sophia Eng, costumed by Scott to be "completely out there."

and then in the next scene she takes off her robe and reveals herself underneath, so that was a guideline to use while making the costume.

"There were a lot of metallics and burgundy, black and greens. I really wanted the opportunity to take a lot of artistic and creative license, and I'm hoping the audience will respond to it in that way. I think the challenge of doing a comedy is not to make the clothes funny. They are supposed to help build the characters and give the film style, but they're not really meant to be funny."

Production designer Bo Welch and director Sonnenfeld already had a rapport through their previous teamings, the most recent being *MEN IN BLACK*. It was an association that helped make Scott's job a little easier. "I had never worked with either one of them," she said, "so it was a really new experience for me. Bo is a great production designer, and the challenge for me was to meet the opulence that he was giving to the sets, because not only are they very fun, but they're also incredibly grand and beautiful. It's a great mix of the silly and the strong. Barry is very specific and has a lot of ideas of how he wants the feel of the film to be and what images he wants to spring forth

from it, but he's very, very collaborative. He really likes you to share your ideas with him. Some directors like to leave you alone, but Barry is very involved and likes to choose colors and be on top of what's going on."

WILD WILD WEST is a huge production that took hundreds of performers and craftspeople, Hollywood's biggest stars—and several performers from other parts of the world—to create, but everything seems to dim in the wake of James Cameron's recreation of one of history's most tragic ocean disasters. Having worked on both films, Scott is in the unique position to compare. "WILD WILD WEST isn't as big," she admitted, "but it's very complicated. Probably two to three hundred extras, as opposed to a thousand. The design for each segment of *WILD WILD WEST* is so different that it's almost like starting a whole new film project over again, and there was a creative license involved with this film, where the pressure of doing something like *TITANIC* was that each scene had to be very, very specifically done; it was a certain time and place; it was historical. *WILD WILD WEST* is much more a fantasy than a period piece. I hope it works for the audience." □

"Bo [Welch] will very quickly become a director," said Sonnenfeld. "He's the best I've ever worked with...He designs as if he were already a filmmaker."

Gordon dwell amongst. Credit readily goes to Bo Welch for his exotic and extravagant designs that, in some cases, appear to take on characteristics like any other character in the story.

"Bo will very quickly be a director," said Sonnenfeld on his film designer of choice who also created the ultra-futuristic offices of the MIB. "He takes the script and then figures out how I can use the sets, the props to help tell the story, and he's the best I've ever worked with. He designs as if he were a filmmaker. And what's great is you then look at what he's designed, whether it's a train or Loveless' mansion, and as a director he's given me opportunities I didn't know existed in terms of where to put the camera, or in terms of telling the audience things about the characters. For instance, in Loveless' mansion, there's all sorts of spider web themes. Bo talked with me early on about different themes and then followed through with them every step of the way. Throughout the movie you'll see these little rods with balls hanging down that are, I guess, a governor, but I like to call them testicles. And in every sin-

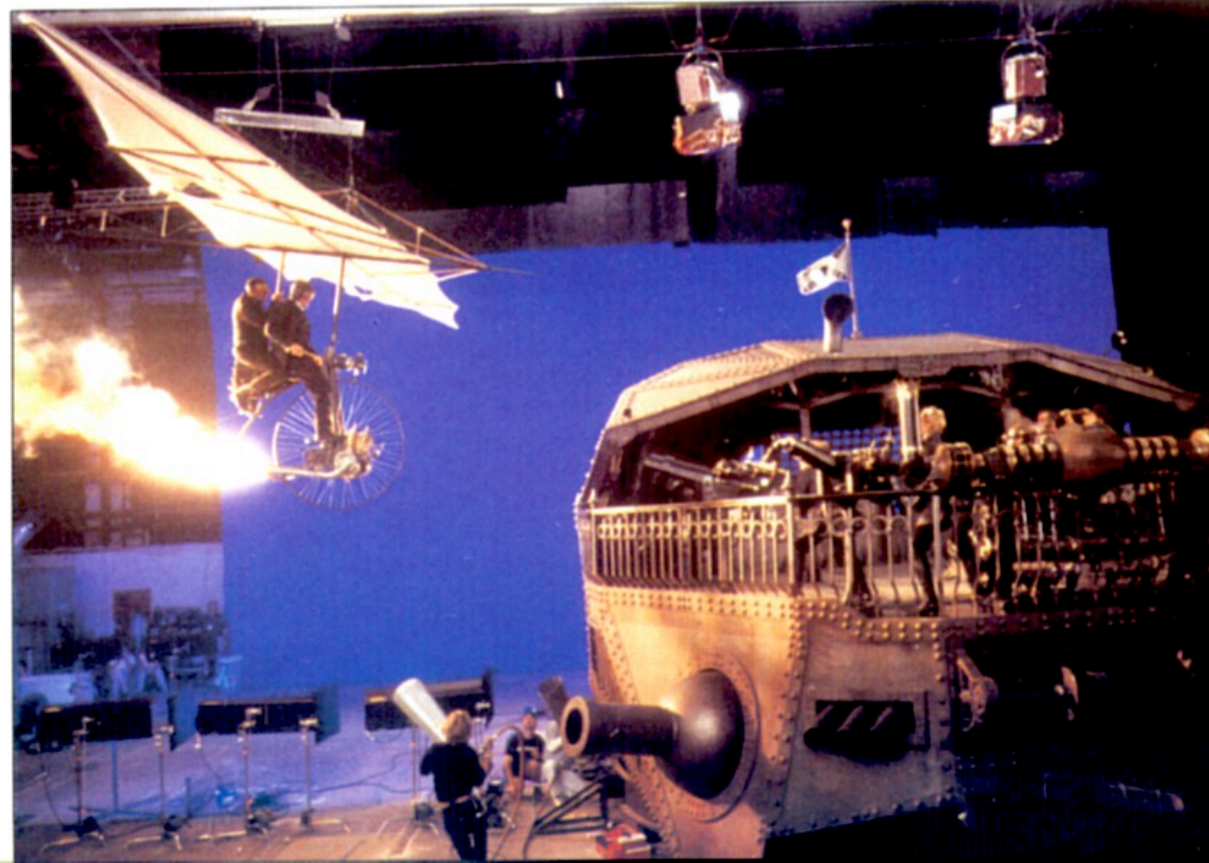
gle thing that Loveless has, whether it's the tank, the machine gun, the back of his own wheelchair, you see these rotating balls. It's just a theme Bo uses. Perhaps it's because he feels that since Loveless doesn't have a penis or testicles, he would put them everywhere.

"The great thing about shooting on sets, especially Bo's sets," Sonnenfeld continued, "is that you have total control. You can put the camera wherever you want. It has tremendous scope. And again, especially because we're dealing with something that existed originally on television, you have to give that audience a reason to come to the movie theater. What you don't want to do is duplicate something that you could see on a 27-inch television set. The great thing about shooting with Bo on these sets

continued on page 43



Arduous blue screen effects filming during post-production included shots of West and Gordon on a flying bike attacking Loveless on his giant mechanical Tarantula war machine.



WILD WILD WEST

PRODUCTION DESIGN

Bo Welch and set decorator Cheryl Carasik on making the west fantastic.

By Frederick C. Szebin

Production designer Bo Welch and set decorator Cheryl Carasik have worked their magic previously with director Barry Sonnenfeld on *MEN IN BLACK*, and together they have teamed up to create the diverse worlds of such films as *PRIMARY COLORS*, *THE BIRD CAGE*, *BATMAN RETURNS* and *EDWARD SCISSORHANDS*.

Welch first became involved with *WWW* when he talked with Sonnenfeld about the possibility of bringing the 1960s TV series to the big screen. It was an idea that interested him from the get-go, but after he read the script the creative fires really began to burn.

"After I read the script I went, 'Mm-hm, this lives up to what I was thinking,'" Welch said. "The screenplay was so ambitious that I sort of exhausted myself from imagining how I would have the sets completed eight months from now. It was impossible to visualize, to imagine a flying aircraft, an 80-foot cast iron wasp. After my first read, I needed a nap."

When the project was finally green-lighted, Sonnenfeld and producing partner Graham Place were working on the highly-regarded Bo Bridges series, *MAXIMUM BOB*. They were very focused on that project, but Welch was beginning his pre-production work in November of 1997, with a potential start date of March or April of 1998 (it wound up being toward the end of May), which gave him less than half a year to realize the extravagant fantasy.



Kenneth Branagh as the wheelchair-bound madman Arliss Loveless, backed by production designer Bo Welch's spider motif.

"I thought there was no way that was going to happen," said Welch of his initial deadline. "When you're the first person on the movie and the director is still finishing up something else and you're in a room reading the script and someone says, 'Yeah, we'd like to start shooting in four months,' you can't even laugh. You're just sort of paralyzed, not with fear, just—paralyzed. You approach it like it's a regular movie with people just talking in rooms. I'm game to do it because I like working fast. Working with Barry, we cover a lot of ground very quickly, but what happens is then when you go to start building these things from the drawings, the whole process slows down. It all catches up with you at some point, but somehow you just leap into it and do the work. You have to. Preproduction happened very fast for a

movie of this scale."

Along with Welch on Sonnenfeld's wild, wild ride were art director Tom Duffield and Carasik, who made *WWW* their 14th movie in a row together. They headed a pool of talented illustrators and set designers that had been put on hold when Tim Burton's *SUPERMAN* had been left in the air. But no one is really interested in calling it a western.

"This would be my first western," Welch says, "if you were to call it a western. But the idea behind *WWW* is of retro-science fiction with a western backdrop, so you get the fun of doing a western and, of course, there have been so many great westerns that you can look back and draw upon the western icons for the backdrop. But on top of all the western stuff is the science fiction element, but it's science fiction through the eyes of an evil futurist of 1869. That's the part that attracted me to the movie, Dr. Loveless."

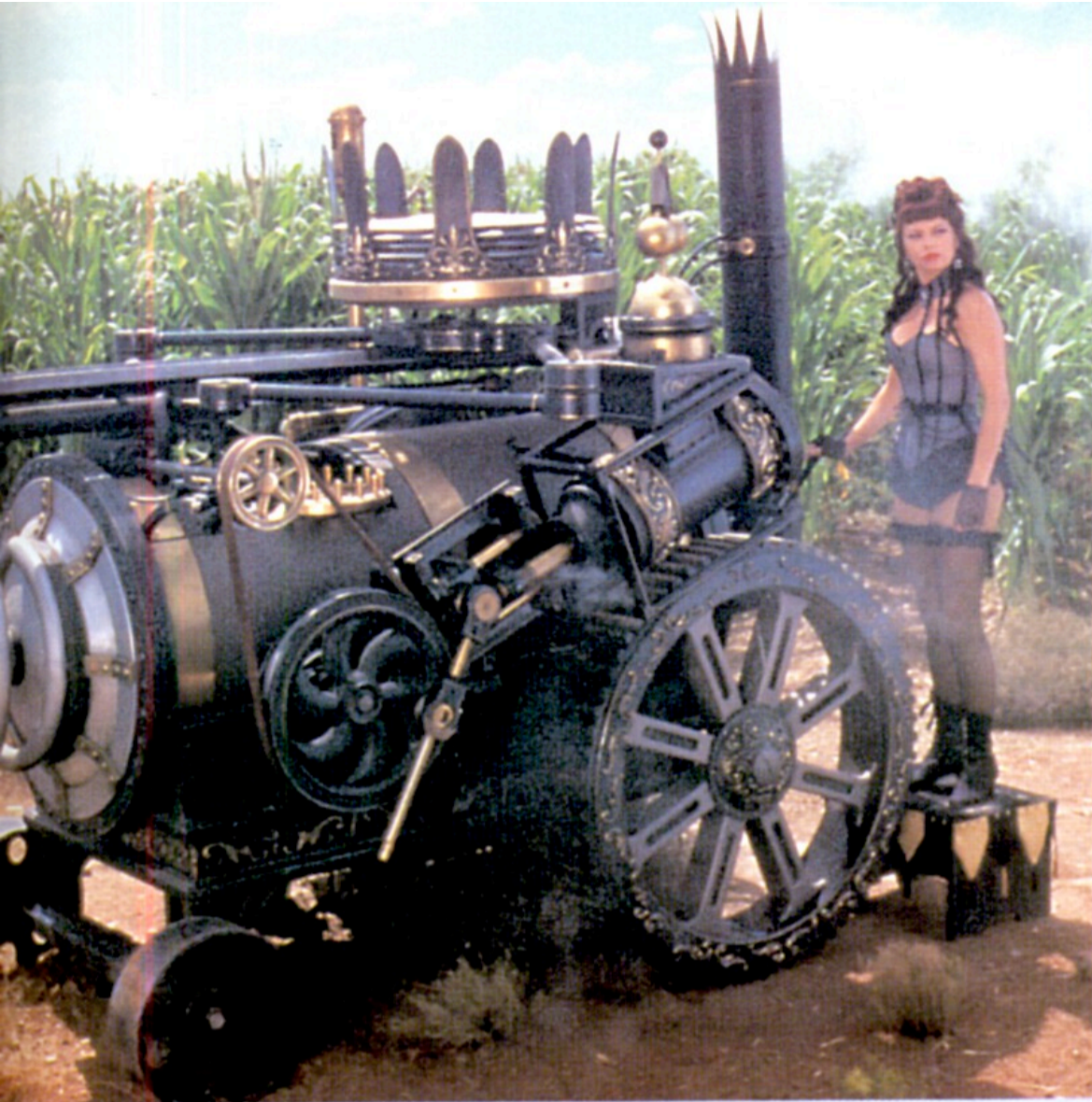
WILD WILD WEST has various set pieces, such as the Wanderer, the specially-designed train that Jim West and Artemus Gordon travel on looking for adventure, and Dr. Loveless' opulent mansion. For the Wanderer, the cars were made specially for the film with air bags so that they could be made to shake as though the train was actually in motion. The majestic steam engine that pulls it all was supplied by train wrangler Jim Clark, whose life is devoted to trains and their preservation. The locomotive of choice was taken out of storage in Baltimore, brought to Pennsylvania and restored from the ground up



Musetta Vander as Munitia shows off the firepower of Loveless' arsenal.

with additional brass plating and a fancy color pallet from the production company to make it a little more showy for the big screen.

For set decorator Carasik, the Wanderer is her favorite set. "It was another actor in the film to me. It has its own personality. It was absolutely totally one hundred percent designed from the carpet being an English hand-woven rug that took us six weeks to get, and we were sweating bullets to get it here on time from England. There was custom dyed fringes and furniture upholstery work done that was incredible. The advance prep on that train was to me the most nail-biting experience of my career because it had to be so detailed and so perfect. The colors weren't just green, they were that perfect green, that incredible olive color that was just so beautiful, and when it photographs, it's exquisite. There's nothing like it. Those colors had to be hand dyed. The fringes were all custom made, and that took around 10 weeks, and I had to pull the trigger on that stuff otherwise we weren't going to have it done. And to think that the little fringe lattice work that was on the valence of the windows was all hand tied by these two women someplace back east in a mill! Just absolutely beautiful stuff. I started



Welch was attracted to the project by the prospect of designing a western a la Jules Verne, as seen through the eyes of Dr. Loveless, an evil futurist in 1869.

crying when I saw the train on the track in Santa Fe. It was just so spectacular to see it all put together."

No matter how fanciful the project may be, research is the key to Carasik's and Welch's jobs, getting on the Internet to find old tools and lab equipment that is appropriate for the period, and touching bases with collectors for any time-worn pieces of furniture that could be pulled out of mothballs for its 15 minutes of fame.

For Loveless' digs, the opulence had to mirror the character's love of beautiful things. This involved Carasik and Welch getting more introspective and deciding what the well-to-do madman of 1869 would choose to live in.

Loveless' bed chamber, equipped with wheelchair ramp and hoists, suntuously appointed by Carasik with custom made black and gold fabrics and leather.



"Black and gold are Loveless' colors," said Carasik. "Bo and I decided on those real early in the film. And I was lucky because there are still a lot of fabricated cut velvets that are in black and gold, so we were able to use some of the actual retro-fabrics that look old, but are still being milled today. I was incredibly fortunate on the color pallet of this set. We decided to do something in the way of Louis the 14th, 15th, 16th, and that was really fun because it's so over the top. As you start developing the way a set looks, it becomes its own person. It develops a personality and defines and develops its character a little more.

"When Kenneth [Branagh] came onto the set for the first

"When Kenneth [Branagh] came onto the set for the first time, he was amazed at what his character had collected," said Carasik. "He had no idea."

time, he was amazed at what his character had collected. He had no idea. We made that for him. That's one of the greatest parts of my job, to take and expand a character by his backdrop. I've been on a few movies that the director has come to me and said, 'Oh, so this is who he is.' We have to expand, especially in the living space, from the script the description of who that person is to how he lives. Artemus Gordon's lab was very much a reflection of his personality. Each personality dictates what the settings are going to be."

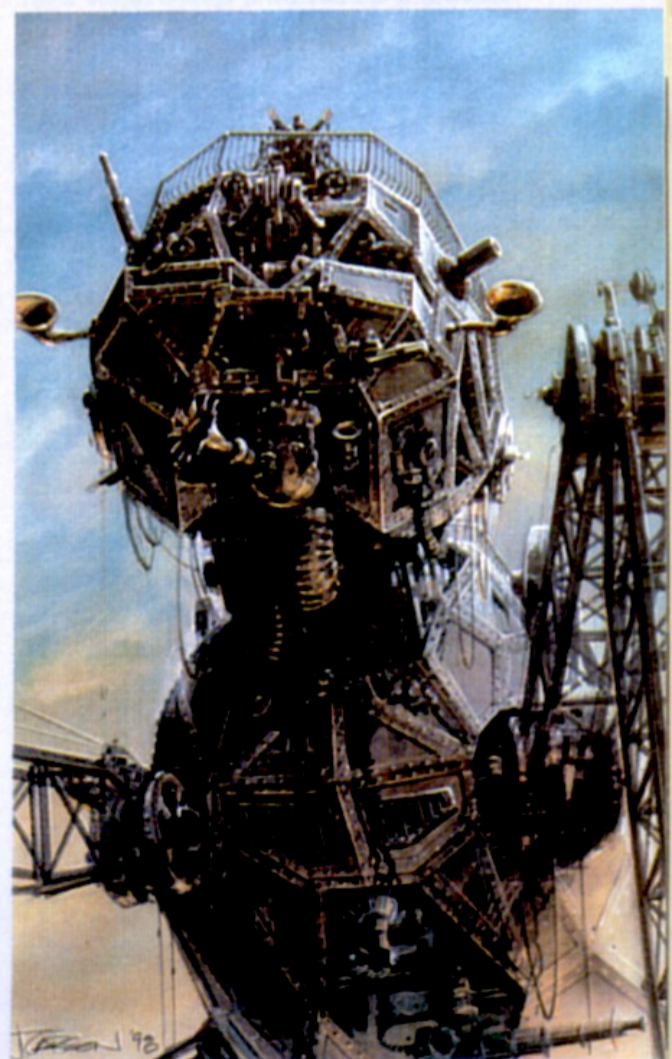
Another key set was President Grant's Oval Office, a stage that involved more artistic license than actual research, Carasik admitted. "There was really no Oval Office at the time," she said of that period of presidential history. "He used the library, and we went ahead and did a mural, which was absolutely beautiful. And there was all the period furniture that I dug out of antique stores that were just decrepit and had to be completely refinished, resprung, retied, everything. Then we put new fabrics on them and used a lot of mohair on this film. That's a great period fabric. I begged some of the prop houses to let me use some of their old furniture, and I have gone through some major extensive work to get the right piece and to not have it be seen in another movie or commercial weeks later."

How much of this fine attention to detail will the audience notice? Hard to say, but Bo Welch doesn't seem that concerned. To him it's just the movies, and movies succeed or fail because of the people standing in the middle of the most opulent sets ever created.

"What I would hope for personally is that you come to this movie and get into the surprise element," he said. "I love

surprise in movies. As the movie unfolds the audience goes for a ride, and the ride is full of surprises; the bad guy isn't the bad guy who ultimately is the bad guy, and his technology continues to grow and surprise you. I think that what was so good about MEN IN BLACK was that not only did it provide the ride, but at its core, there was a really great relationship between, in that case, Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones, and in this case between Will and Kevin Kline. When you go to the dailies and you see the relationship, I think it's reassuring, and that's the thing that really keeps people in the story and propels them along through the ride; it's the two guys and the fun that they have together. WILD WILD WEST is a big effects-driven, character-driven show with fun things to look at. The kind of movie I'd want to go see." □

Design for Loveless' Tarantula war-machine, exemplifying the legless scientist's fascination for spiders.





MAKEUPS

Rick Baker on devising effects and prosthetics.

By Frederick C. Szebin

After working together on *MEN IN BLACK*, Barry Sonnenfeld and makeup master Rick Baker re-team for *WILD WILD WEST*, in which Baker works his Academy Award-winning magic on bad guy Ted Levine, three out of four variations of star Kevin Kline, and a disembodied head named Morton. This is a film Baker admits to being a much more fun assignment than *MIB*, simply because of its easier workload, and due to a certain affection to the subject matter.

"I knew that the Artemus Gordon character was a master of disguise," said Baker. "I was actually a little disappointed that they didn't develop that aspect of Artemus more in the script. There are only a few disguises that he does. I liked the idea of doing an historical character like

Levine's McGrath, a crazy rebel with his ear blown off, the film's most elaborate makeup for Baker's team.



President Grant, and the challenge of turning Kevin Kline, who's a very big and masculine man, into a woman."

Kline becomes a buxom wench to gather information. This was an interesting challenge for Baker, as he had to femme up a gentleman who apparently works out to keep trim.

Baker used a corset and silicone gel-filled breasts. "I really didn't want to put too much on him," said Baker. "Originally, I had made lips for him, and eliminated those because Kevin was a little apprehensive about wearing them. We ended up just painting them. He has a nose piece and a piece that covers his brow. There's a lot of contouring with paint highlights and shadows, and, of course, a wig."

Kline also plays President Ulysses S. Grant and Artemus impersonating the president. Noted Baker, "They originally were talking about having another actor [apparently *WWW* TV star Robert Conrad] play the real Grant, and I said this is very difficult to do. It's really difficult to make one person look like another. So I suggested that Kevin play both parts."

With Kline playing both parts, Baker had to simplify the makeup due to the time restraints to film scenes as split-screen composites. "When I first started the project, the Grant part was much smaller, and we did a much more elaborate makeup than we ended up doing on the film, where he was covered completely with appliances to make him resemble Grant much more. We simplified the makeup, and actually I still think it is very effective. Kevin basically has a nose on and, again, some careful painting, a



Ted Levine, the serial killer of *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*, as General McGrath, production design (l) supervised by Bo Welch.

beard and a wig, and now the differences between the real Grant and the fake one are negligible. You can't tell the difference."

Kline also impersonates a Mountain Man, which Baker described as "a fairly simple makeup. It's pretty much a beard, a wig, eyebrows and paint again. I think this character will probably look more like Kevin than he does in the other disguises that we've done."

Probably the most elaborate makeup that Baker did is for General McGrath, a crazy rebel guy with his ear blown off. Noted Baker, "In place of his ear, he has this little kind of gramophone and a scarred-up thing with a pull-down eye on the actor, Ted Levine, really chews up the scenery in this. Fortunately, Ted is one of those actors who gets off on the process and enjoys whatever it takes to make

the makeup much cooler, kind of like Vincent D'Onofrio was in *MEN IN BLACK*. We ended up gluing his eyelid down, and he was all for it. Not a lot of actors will let you do that."

The art of Baker's craft is making someone, even a person with a face as famous as Kevin Kline's, unrecognizable. "I've seen *MISSION IMPOSSIBLE* type films where they disguise an actor," said Baker, "and they completely cover him with rubber, and you can still see the actor in it. That's what is interesting about the President Grant makeup. It is basically a nose, a wig, a beard and some careful painting, and you don't see Kevin in it. A lot of times you can get the maximum effect with the minimum amount of stuff. What changes people most of the time are things like the eyebrows; changing their shape and density does a

West and Gordon in a search for clues shine light through the retina of a dead scientist to project the image of his attacker, a fake head cast in silicone.



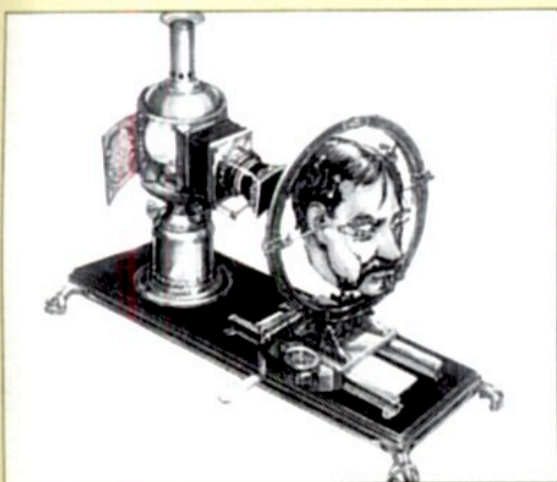
lot of it. Even I was surprised when we did a first test of how totally lost Kevin was in that makeup with the little amount of stuff that we did to him."

As for Morton, the disembodied head, there was a 19th, early 20th-century concept that said light shown through the retina of a dead man will reveal the last thing he saw. Jim West and Artemus Gordon find themselves needing such information when a scientist gets decapitated and his skull is treated to some old time science.

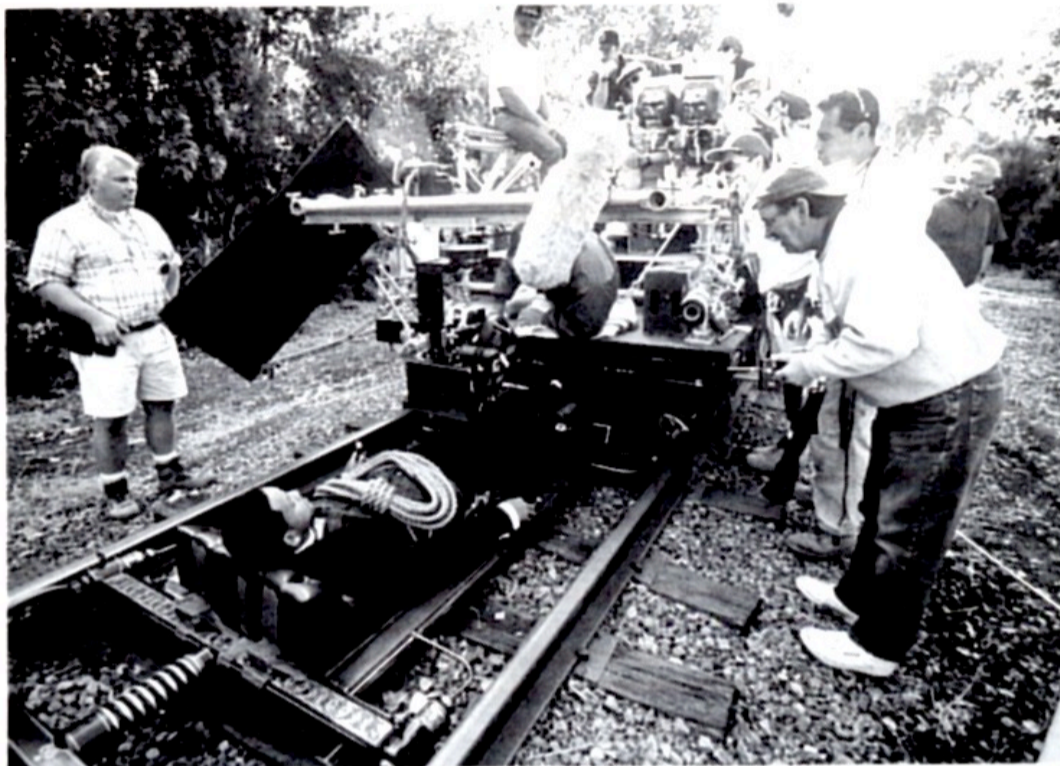
Director Barry Sonnenfeld suggested that Baker use his own head for the effect, but Baker nominated shop sculptor Mitch Devane for having a more 19th-century face. Baker used silicone to cast Devane's likeness for the props. "The silicone is translucent like skin, so we can intrinsically color it and get a much more realistic look," said Baker. "All the hairs are individually implanted into the silicone. It's a lot of work and very time consuming to make a likeness head."

No matter what technology a movie utilizes, the play—and the players—are still the thing. It's a fact that isn't lost on Baker, whose years in the business from low budget projects to epic summertime fare has shown him the best and worst his work can bring out in a featured player. "It's funny that you can do an incredible makeup on an actor," he said, "and if he doesn't have fun with it, it doesn't work. And you can also do a mediocre makeup on an actor who enjoys the process and makes it work. It's hard in my book for anybody to stand up to what Eddie Murphy's done with makeups, but Kevin seemed to be having fun with it." □

Early concept sketch supervised by production designer Bo Welch of the effect. Baker used the likeness of his makeup shop sculptor Mitch Devane.



"You have to give that audience a reason to come to the movie theatre," said Sonnenfeld. "You don't want to duplicate something that you could see on a TV set."



One stunt after another: filming Will Smith in action when a trick train car seat places him under the moving railroad car, ready to ascend and turn the tables.

is that, what you want to do is give the audience their money's worth. Oftentimes people design beautiful sets and then cinematographers or directors shoot the sets as if they're television shows with tight close-ups and long lenses. I like to shoot with very wide lenses, so we really see the scope of the sets, and because Bo knows I like to shoot with long lenses, he builds these very big sets with high ceilings and it feels like a big movie. Loveless' lair looks like a Victorian train station."

The inspiration for Loveless' mansion was very Louis the 14th or 16th, according to Welch. "The bad guy in the movie always has to have the best props. He has the best sets, the most extreme in everything. For Loveless, we know that he's this guy who's basically sawed off at the waistline and mounted to a steam-powered wheelchair, and so you start with that and go from there knowing he's an angry, insane Civil War Confederate, maniac mechanical genius who, I figured, was living in New Orleans. And through New Orleans you get a French connection; he was into cast iron architecture, which they started

in France in the 1860s. It hadn't started in America until later that century, but since he was a futurist he knew what was going on in Europe. His house is basically a gigantic cast iron mansion, and his lair is a gigantic cast iron green house of sorts, and his boat is a cast iron mixture of the Monitor, the Merrimac and a Mississippi riverboat. And because he's a man without legs, the thing that fascinates him most in nature is the spider because the spider has eight legs and is very mobile, resourceful and is an engineering genius of nature. That makes the spider a recurring motif. Basically, I take these design ideas and beat you over the head with them in my heavy-handed way."

Using that historically-based building method even went into Loveless' engine of destruction, the Tarantula, a sky-high mobile tank used to destroy an entire town at one point in the story. Each piece of this frolicking emissary of death was carefully planned and created to make it as real to the period's technological foundation as a stagecoach or a six gun.

"The design of the tarantula was described in the screen-

play," said Welch. "I had a brief discussion with Barry in which he said it was sort of like an erector set, and steam driven. When he said that the design just clicked in my head instantly. I did some little drawings of how I would interpret it, and it was really the first thing designed in the movie because I thought a 60- to 80-foot object is going to take some time to build, or even just some time to figure out how to do it. Ultimately, we built two heads; one is lightweight on a motion control base and the other is pretty heavy so that we could crash the Wasp [one of Artemus Gordon's pre-Wright flying machines] into it, and it's also on airbags to move it around. We built the belly of the Tarantula, which is the engine room. That's an important set because the climax of the movie happens there—the battle between Loveless and James West—and we built one leg.

"The erector set idea started me thinking about using the technology of the period to define the film's look. I started thinking about heavy cast iron pieces, steam-driven, heavy locomotive flywheels and smoke stacks, dripping fluids and leaky things, which makes the film distinctive and peculiar to that period, and ultimately fun. I love the heavy metal aspect of it, because everything today in terms of the future and science fiction is so clean, smooth, light and tiny with chips. It's so fun and refreshing to go back and have similar gadgets that do the same thing and have them weigh half a ton."

A set that becomes a virtual effect in *WWW* is the western town built by director Lawrence Kasdan for his 1985 western, *SILVERADO*. A standing set ever since, Silverado has been used for countless westerns, including *WYATT EARP*, various rock videos and commercials. It was chosen for its uninterrupted, uncluttered horizon that gives a clear view of open plains for 50 miles in any direction.

"It has a very clean graphic quality," said Welch about the New Mexico location. "The skies are beautiful there. If I'm remembering this correctly, Dr. Loveless gets in the Tarantula

continued on page 46

WILD WILD WEST

THE ORIGINAL SERIES

Producers Bruce Lansbury and Fred Frierberger on the making of "the best action show ever on TV."

By Jim Dowie

"Things, Artemus, are not always what they appear to be." These are the words spoken by James T. West, Secret Service Agent, to his partner, Artemus Gordon, as they were about to cross wits and maybe swords for the first time with the West's most dastardly villain, Dr. Miguelito Loveless, in the show chosen by *Black Belt Magazine*, as the best action show ever on TV, **THE WILD WILD WEST**.

From 1965-1969 in 104 episodes, we could watch President Grant's top two agents, Jim (Robert Conrad) and Arte (Ross Martin) face the wildest menagerie of villainous geniuses that would not only threaten America or the world, but would also subject our heroes to a myriad of Mickey Finns, traps, slides, chutes, trapdoors, secret panels, lethal furniture and elevators that would ultimately transport them to underground or underwater hideouts that subterraneously criss-crossed the countless cow towns and coastal cities of the era.

And just when you thought that Jim's fists and feet or shoe knife, sleeve gun and exploding balls hidden somewhere on his person, couldn't prevent him from becoming a human punching bag, fish bait, ant food, target practice or any other outrageous circumstance about to end his life, in would step a grungy wayfarer, Eastern magician, Arabian guitar player, Swedish waiter, German cook or a salty old sea dog, who would innocently stand next to Jim



Conrad and Ross Martin as Artemus in the 1979 TV movie **THE WILD WILD WEST REVISITED**, saving the heads of Europe from a bomb rigged by Meguilito Loveless, Jr.

and wink. It was, of course, Arte in one of his hundreds of disguises that nobody else would recognize except for West and the millions of viewers who were also cued in by Richard Markowitz's musical "Gordon's schtick." It was these unusual makeup creations, the over-the-top action, the creative sound tracks and West and Gordon's gadgets and inventions that aided in their inventive escapes from what seemed to be unconquerable odds, that added to the show's charm and magic.

Noted producer Bruce Lansbury, who later produced **MISSION IMPOSSIBLE** and **MURDER SHE WROTE**, "We basically sold the show to the network as James Bond in the West. They could grasp that idea. At the time, shows like **THE AVENGERS** influenced

our stories. West was an undercover operative of the 1880s and carried an arsenal of weapons in his hat, up his sleeve, the heel of his boot. Although grounded in the myth and lore of the West, it was a bizarre series based in fantasy, science fiction, romance and heavily influenced by Jules Verne. We'd take classic literature, film and contemporary science and shamelessly commandeer these elements into a style I think was unique to television at the time. I liked to do fantasy but we did some straight action and Westerns, we made it an oleo of styles.

"But the show also featured imaginative stunts and, of course, Conrad's specialty, the fight sequences. Bob Conrad lived and breathed action, he didn't want dialogue. In fact, on

the first day on set, Ross Martin appeared with lifts on his boots. Conrad grabbed him by the lapels and put him up against the wall saying, 'Look, I'm the one who wears the lifts.' Bob is not a tall man. So that said a lot. Ross was the actor and Bob was the action man and you never made a mistake of confusing the two, and that you learned very quickly. You'd give Ross the juicy roles and parts and Bob the fights. That was the rule of thumb but that's what made the show work. They became good friends."

West and Gordon's most acclaimed adversary and formidable foe was the psychotically-childish, demented genius Dr. Miguelito Loveless. Unlike the film adaptation of Loveless, where Kenneth Branagh is

dwarfed by the loss of his legs, the TV version of Loveless was eloquently portrayed by the 3' 10" dwarf actor Michael Dunn.

John Kneubuhl is credited with creating the sardonic small guy. Apparently one day, while with producer Fred Frierberger, Kneubuhl was skimming through a *Time* magazine and saw a picture of Michael Dunn and hit upon the idea of making him a villain. Creator Michael Garrison flew to New York to look for Dunn who had a nightclub act with his singing partner Phoebe Dorin. Dorin signed on as Antoinette, Loveless' singing sidekick. Each time they appeared on a show they would sing a song from the 1800s.

Recalled Frierberger, "I had big problems with the network with having a dwarf as the head villain. But I was fascinated



“Ross was the actor and Bob was the action man and you learned that quickly,” said Lansbury. “You gave Ross the juicy roles and Bob handled the fights.”

The amazing Robert Conrad as West perfected a unique blend of karate, kung-fu, savate and boxing, a knack for fight action sadly lacking in the new movie.

with the concept. He hated everybody but the real target of his anger was God for making him such a monstrosity. Even after his successful debut in the episode ‘The Night the Wizard Shook the Earth,’ the network didn’t want me to hire him again. But William Pailey (founder of CBS) in New York saw it and said for me to get those people on a contract.

Michael Dunn appeared 10 times and Loveless was undoubtedly the most famous villain.”

Freiberger and his partner Richard Landau also drew up what they called the “10 Commandments,” a pseudo-checklist of things that writers would follow when putting their scripts together. “Some writers took it seriously,” said Freiberger-

Finding the crashed saucer in “The Night of the Flying Pie Plate,” a 1966 second season show that saw West foiling faux aliens from stealing U.S. gold.



er. “Each script needed to have a strong adversary as powerful as Jim, gorgeous girls and at the end of the second act, in the middle of the play, the writer didn’t know how to get our heroes out of the mess. Then we’d all go in and try to figure things out. It had to be bizarre.”

And speaking of bizarre, what about some of those other villains: a man-eating house, female aliens, a giant squid, an invisible man, a Harvard Professor, an eccentric magician, a man made of steel and a man with iron legs, Frankenstein, ghosts, ultra-intellectuals with swollen heads or swollen egos and a collection of inventors that created weapons like giant tuning forks, fire-breathing dragon torpedoes, earthquakes, flame throwers, paralyzing bacteria, bird-shaped cannons and anything else that the writers and producers could lose their minds into.

When writer/story editor Henry Sharp wrote, “Things, Artemus, are not always what they appear to be,” it was so thematically accurate that, according to Lansbury, the quote was embroidered and framed by the set director Raymond Molyneaux and hung over the desk during story conferences so all would remember to do the unexpected.

Each week Conrad would unpredictably burst into unique mixtures and combinations of karate, kung-fu, savate, boxing or anything else he deemed necessary to produce a visually interesting look.

Noted long-time Conrad buddy Wesley Hughes, considered one of Hollywood’s best stuntmen and the show’s stunt coordinator, “We’d spend two-three hours blocking and rehearsing the fights, going through each movement. Bobby would set up three or so cameras and we’d shoot it in one take, no matter how long. Just

block and film it. If you got hurt during the shot, you gut it out and finish the shot. One take and that was that.”

In “The Night of the Fugitives,” the show was shut down for 12 weeks because of “the accident.” While swinging on a chandelier, Conrad plummeted to a cement floor painted like wood and split his skull. Five months later Martin broke his leg by tripping over a rifle and then two months later suffered a heart attack. Several weeks later Martin returned to finish what was to be the final season.

Summed-up Lansbury, “The show was comic bookish but was taken off the air because politicians said it was too violent. I disagreed, but the show was made the sacrificial lamb to Senator Dodd’s committee on ‘Sex and violence on television.’ So they took a winner off the air with a 34 share. For those who remember the show, we were privy to witness how the West was won....and lost by CBS.” □

Martin as Artemus, showing off his flair for disguise to go undercover, an idea recreated in the new movie.



WILD WILD WEST

SPECIAL EFFECTS

Michael Lantieri on devising the on-set action and working with ILM.

By Frederick C. Szebin

The science fiction element of *WILD WILD WEST* attracted special effects supervisor Michael Lantieri. "The idea of building all the hardware that you see in this got me hooked," said Lantieri, who supervised the film's on-set effects. "We've got the world's first wheelchair; the world's first tank; the Tarantula that Loveless, our villain, runs around in; and then there are all the interactive gags that we have that were put in later with CGI. Carrying that performance into the set just gives us a huge opportunity to mix all these tools up for, we hope, a surprising outcome.

"The idea of putting a western together with the high-tech hardware that you see in this film really intrigued me, and I always wanted to drop a water tower. Jeffrey Price and Peter Seaman, our rewrite people, called me and said, 'You know, you're going to get your chance to drop the water tower if you take this job.'"

The opening sequence has Will Smith in a water tower spying down on a saloon. Noted Lantieri, "We actually built a full-sized water tower and hooked it up with the wheels of a wagon, busted the legs out from underneath it and literally dumped water, and then did pick-ups with Will's double Randy, and just dropped it through the roof of the saloon. It was one of the first gags we did, so we kind of shot it in continuity in that respect, and it was as fun as I thought it might be!"

Other key pieces of equip-



Setting up the camera angle on West's train as seen from the vantage of Loveless attacking Tarantula, during location filming.

ment Lantieri and his crew needed to deal with involved the 1860s version of high-tech equipment, namely the specially-made train heroes Jim West and Artemus Gordon ride in to the rescue, dubbed The Wanderer; the Nitrocycle, a rocket-powered shape shifter that becomes The Wasp once it takes to the air, pieces of Loveless's rampaging Tarantula for close-ups, with the performers, and then there were Will Smith's breasts.

"Will's got the greatest breasts I've ever seen," Lantieri laughed. "We have a scene where Will is in drag, and when he reaches a certain point, tassels on his breasts start to spin and they shoot flame-throwers out of them. So we had to build a custom bra that had a flame-thrower built into it with spinning tassels. We went through all of that only to find out that there's a stripper who actually has the same thing already

built," Lantieri laughed. "No joke. Somewhere in Las Vegas. Coulda just hired her, had her come in for a performance."

Lantieri's most difficult task was devising the Nitrocycle and Wasp, a bicycle that turns into a hang-glider. "Barry didn't want to make everything too new and have shiny bright objects, so we worked real hard to make everything look like it was made from pieces of the period when the story takes place," said Lantieri about working with director Barry Sonnenfeld. "The Nitrocycle was kind of a challenging project because the balance of a bicycle is something that you take for granted when you ride one, but when you

start adding all kinds of weight in the front wheels, especially large front wheels, it just doesn't want to perform and handle in a manner that you'd like it to. So we had to be very careful about everything we put on the Nitrocycle. We weighed every nut and bolt, and kept it balanced on either side, and had to have custom wheels made. We basically built this bicycle from scratch, all the metal work you see, all the forging and steel work and welding and re-grinding the welds to make it look like it was forged, all the plating; everything from the ground up we built in my shop with all my metal guys. Each step of the way we had to make sure it looked as though it was built from original materials from the 1860s. On top of that, we had to add the newer things, such as the engine and the flame that comes out, and put this all together and still make it able to be ridden by someone with all

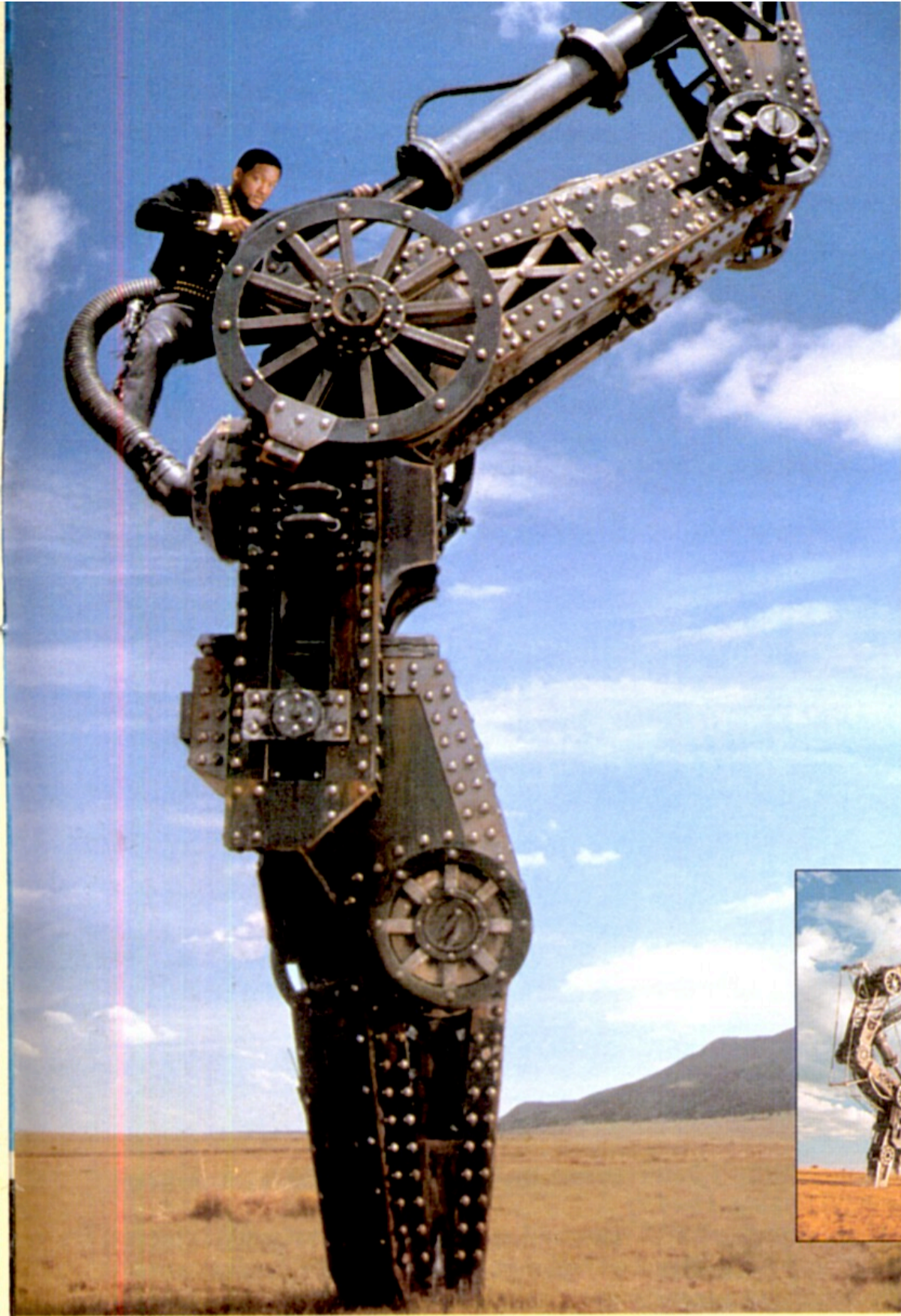
and storms off. It's really important, particularly with a CG model, to have that model do something to the earth, because the more you can connect the real physical earth to that monster, the Tarantula, the more successful it is. You take it out and see what kind of destruction it can do, and it incorporates one of the ideas that I love in this movie, which is taking the western icon, the town with the dusty main street, and overlaying our science fiction element. The combination of the two is just thrilling to me. The idea of, instead of the gunslinger coming down the end of the street, the spurs clicking, stopping, and pulling the gun, you've got an 80-foot tarantula at the end of the street, pulling out his guns, ready to decimate a city."

The actors must fit in there somewhere, taking the chance of getting out-acted by the sumptuous settings and state-of-the-art effects. It is doubtful, though, that actors like Will Smith, Kevin Kline, Salma Hayek and Kenneth Branagh could get out-acted by anything short of each other.

"This is definitely the most action sequences I've ever done," said Will Smith. "The blue screen elements are the most difficult elements of the film. You're acting against nothing, performing with nothing, but Barry keeps it fun." □

Filming Smith and Kline blue screen in Loveless' decapitation collars, plucked from unsavory hiding.





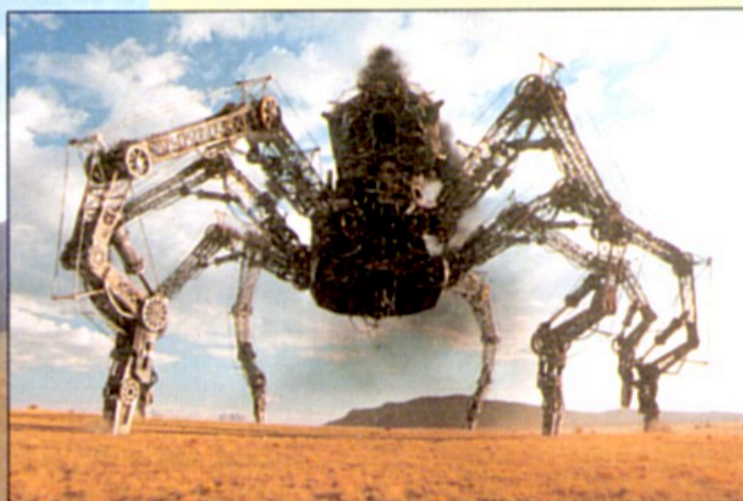
“Now that we’ve taken effects to a level where we can create things unheard of,” said Lantieri, “there’s a responsibility to make these things do something interesting.”

half to him. It’s the old magician’s trick. It’s kind of a forced perspective seat with motors and everything hidden, and appears to be steam-driven. Kenneth is pretty much in it through the whole movie, everywhere he goes.”

CGI expert Brevig worked closely with Lantieri to make sure that the most was gotten from the mixture of their computer-driven and on-set special

do the interactive situations and gags on the set. The Tarantula, for instance, is giant. It’s 65 feet in the air. We did build one leg of it, which weighs 10,000 pounds, and it’s not even really one leg, it’s a quarter of one leg, and we did things with Will climbing on it, and it stomping down on the ground and cracking the earth and things like that so that we could have something happening on set. Then Eric built the rest of the Tarantula, but the on-set effect gave us a good piece for shadow and things like that, and just shipping a giant spider leg across three states that weighs that much presents problems.”

Lantieri noted that recent strides in special effects capabilities brings a new responsibility. “Now that we’ve taken special effects to the level where we can create things unheard of before, I feel there’s a real responsibility to use those tools to make these things do something interesting. And I think you’ll see that some movies do that, some movies don’t. I think that because we have a great mix—characters and a great story—we can use the tools to help tell the story. That’s what attracted me to this work in the first place.” □



effects. The trick was helping them complement each other in a seamless fashion.

“Early on in the project,” said Lantieri, “Eric Brevig and I sat down and we cut up what we thought could be done live action and what would have to be totally digital, and if it was totally digital, what effects it would have on the set. Then we went back over the plan and tried to

For point-of-view angles of the carnage wrought by Loveless from his Tarantula, ILM composited a western town miniature with blue screen shots of the actors.



Smith scales a full-size Tarantula leg built for live-action, seamlessly combined with shots of ILM’s computer-generated war machine (r) in post-production.

of this extra hardware on it, so it really was quite a challenge.”

But the bicycle half was easy compared to making the Wasp fly. “We had a 25-foot wing span on top of this thing that’s muslin-draped,” said Lantieri. “One of the biggest fears we had was not riding it, but keeping it from flying in a big wind. When you put that big wing out there, the air wants to grab it, tip it over and actually fly it. We made custom wings that the air would flow through and not have so much lift, and then we built hidden training wheels that helped to give us the effect of riding a bicycle effortlessly.”

The Wanderer is an important set piece, built with overstuffed chairs that flip over so that anyone sitting in them could be fastened in then turned upside down so that they would wind up underneath the moving train, while Loveless’s special

wheelchair was built to house a character with no lower half, having lost it in an explosion years earlier. Kenneth Branagh had to deal with a torturous device that gave his character freedom to move around.

“We built a custom wheelchair that Kenneth slid into where his legs were folded back,” said Lantieri. “And we built another set of legs that he bounces around on. Eric Brevig took this film and, with his computer, removed whatever we see of Kenneth’s legs. We made a huge attempt to try to give Barry shots so we didn’t have to use photographic effects, so the wheelchair is a pretty unique item. Kenneth was really great about being uncomfortable and not complaining, and actually once we lock him into the chair, there are a bunch of shots you look at him and you think there’s no bottom

AUSTIN POWERS

THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME

Director Jay Roach on spoofing the Bond formula.

By Douglas Eby

Returning a second time as director to the world of the retro secret agent man was a pleasure for Jay Roach, he affirmed: "It was a very welcome thing. I fortunately got offered a lot of projects after doing the first one, but it was an easy choice to say, no, I really want to do the sequel. Mike [Myers] and I have such a great time getting together, and we had so much more confidence going into the second one than we did on the first one. We believed in the first one, but by the time we got to start the second one, we said, wow, we have something and people seem to get it and like it, so let's take it even further." New Line opened their second adventure June 11.

Roach and Myers, along with Michael McCullers, had connected early on to develop the characters of Austin "Danger" Powers, Dr. Evil and the others. Roach recalled, "We hashed out opportunities and possibilities for a long time. That was very gratifying, and the characters grew out of that. But it's Mike's script and Mike's vision. He is an amazing guy."

Having credits on a variety of films as producer, cinematographer, and writer, Roach said he really wants to pursue directing: "I sort of developed my experience to have abilities in a lot of different areas, so that when I showed up as director I would know what each department was working on, how they would achieve what I wanted, how they would solve the problems I

threw at them, and I've found that that worked. Because I had been everything from a grip to a writer, I was able to communicate better on the set, and also in pre-production and in postproduction; I had done a little editing and sound mixing. I had done a little of everything; a jack of all trades, and master of none, and hopefully that works into ultimately becoming a master director. I don't consider myself there yet, but I'm going to keep working on it." His most likely next project, that he's actively developing, will be *THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY*.

Roach credits the authors of *Hitchhiker's Guide*, and *AUSTIN POWERS* for inspiring him: "When you're around people with minds like Mike Myers and Douglas Adams, you do start to believe there is an elite class of brain that not all of us get. You just want to be around it as much as you

Austin and Felicity get a bead on Dr. Evil. Roach, who also helmed the original, is planning to film Douglas Adams' *HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY*.



Heather Graham as CIA operative Felicity Shagwell.

can, and as often as you can, and if you just set as a goal to create the perfect atmosphere within which the sparks can fly from these funny, good minds, then all you have to do is have the camera in the right place, and a lot of film."

Roach noted he was a fan of the James Bond films, and grew up with them, but also appreciated other films "that didn't take themselves quite so seriously, but were certainly inspired by Bond: *OUR MAN FLYNT*, the Matt Helm movies, and a few European versions of the spy genre. There was a film called *DANGER: DIABOLIK* which is more of a super-thief kind of thing, but

there's espionage and spying in it, and it's very stylized and colorful. And there's an even more stylized film called *THE TENTH VICTIM* with Marcello Mastroianni and Ursula Andress, which we studied, because we wanted to find a way to, not so much spoof a genre, as embrace the best parts of it and then put a twist from Mike's unique persona. To do that, we were almost like these DJ mixmaster guys looking to sample the most interesting parts of a lot of different things, and combine our own flavors with them to create something entirely different. I'm hap-



Austin (Mike Myers) and Felicity time-travel back to London's swinging '60s to foil another plot by Dr. Evil.

py that it doesn't come off as a parody film. It seems to me to be much more embracing of a character, and also unashamedly borrowing from so many great parents, if you will. That's a mixed metaphor, but there is a genetic structure that we owe to so many previous films, but it is also its own unique individual."

Although growing up in New Mexico, Roach vividly recalled a six-month period during 1967: "My parents and I drove through the Haight-Ashbury district a couple of times. My parents, who were relatively conservative and Southern, were kind of horror-struck by it, but we kids in the back seat of the station wagon were just fascinated. Our faces were pressed against the windows and soaking it up like we were Alice in Wonderland. And I'll never forget seeing it that way, kind of the 'theme park tour' of it. Certainly we didn't know anything about drugs and dangerous sex, and anything like that, and that's kind of the fuzzy memory, the filter, through which Austin Powers is presented. We brought to this the superficial, kind of stylized, joyous and musical aspects of the sixties. Certainly not an honest representation of it. But we tried to embrace the best parts of it: the emphasis on love and dancing, music and color and freedom; all the things that were the silver lining in the whole era."

The inspiration for the films, specifically the character of Austin, started with Mike Myers listening to Burt Bacharach records. Roach noted: "That's really what it comes from, the music that Mike loves, and Mike is a musician. He performed in the first movie. He's also such a big fan of pop culture, and that particular era has value for him."

Roach confirmed a report that Myers is also a fan—even an "addict"—of The History Channel: "Yes, in fact that's something he and I had in common when we first met. I was not so much from the world of come-

Myers in his dual role as Dr. Evil. Noted Roach of his collaborator, "It's Mike's vision. He's an amazing guy."



“When you're around people like Mike Myers and Douglas Adams, you start to believe there is an elite class of brain that not all of us get.”

—Director Jay Roach—

dy, and had done a lot of research for a project about World War II, and Mike is a self-taught expert on that aspect of history. So we would sit and talk about that, and my project. It was a funny way for us to get together, and then for that to inspire him to hire me to direct the first AUSTIN POWERS was a pretty funny idea."

For Roach, "directing any movie is all about casting, working with the cast and getting them to feel confident and comfortable and spontaneous. I am very focused on casting as about 80 or 90 percent of the preproduction process, and I just insist on surrounding myself with actors who are not only good, and inspired, and technically capable, but are completely comfortable with getting off on the script. To be prepared to do what's scripted, but then to be ready to run with Mike, because once he takes off, a lesser actor would be left in the dust if they were just stuck in the script. So you can't come in with just preconceptions, and just stick with that. You have to be able to jump to something far better, and it happens almost every day on our sets, where I show up with storyboards, and Mike shows up with something in mind, the other cast members show up with something, then when we start rehearsing, we say, 'Oh, this is much better; this is all good, let's keep all that, but this over here could be much better; let's perform it differently.' Everyone in the cast rose to that, and started spinning off ideas."

Contrasting the new film with the earlier one, Roach noted, "This one, THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME, was different in one important way. The script had more time to evolve. Mike was even more confident with the character, and Michael McCullers was now co-writing with him, and they got to work a fair amount of time on it. On the first one, we put a lot of it together as we were in preproduction, but on this one, they had a really tight script to begin with, which was great. The more preparation you have in any of this, the more you can improvise off of that. If you're always struggling just to even make it make sense, you are always conservative. But if it already makes sense, then you can step off of what's predictable, and what you thought you were going to do, and try other, wilder things." □

MUPPETS F

Producer Brian Henson on the magic of the

By William Wilson Goodson Jr.

Brian Henson, Master Muppeteer Jim Henson's son is the President and CEO of The Jim Henson Company and producer of *MUPPETS FROM SPACE*, which TriStar opens nationwide July 30. Noted Henson, "We wanted to go back to the energy of the first Muppet movie and do it for the '90s. Humor that's for everyone, all the family rather than skewed to the kids."

According to Henson, "Jerry



Suffering a severe identity crisis, Gonzo (l) discovers that his ancestry is from space, and is reunited with his species (above).



Juhl came up with the idea of doing a movie discovering the origins of the Great Gonzo. [Gonzo] is experiencing this horrible identity crisis and believes he is being contacted from outer space. He starts believing he is an alien and they are coming to get him. Meanwhile, the government actually starts discovering facts that confirm Gonzo's story and a special agent grabs him. Gonzo is revealed as an alien, and our Muppets are trying to reunite him with his family."

Gonzo being an alien, explains how he has always seemed to have a clear, consistent view of the world that resembles no one else's. In fact, it settles most questions about this mysterious character, except for his odd relationship with chickens. "Actually, we tried to explain the chickens in one of the drafts, but we gave up. We decided that these aliens, for whatever reason, just think chickens are the greatest."

The primary design team for *MUPPETS IN SPACE*, Steve Marsh, production man-

ager; Bill Davis, art director, and Alan Cassie, supervising art director, had to solve a number of off-beat problems in building sets for humans and, well, puppets.

As Alan Cassie pointed out on the North Carolina set, "Steve has to design two environments, the environment you're seeing on film, the sets, but also the world where the Muppeteers are working which is always under the set. Everything is designed for supporting the Muppeteers, to facilitate their working."

As much as possible, the sets are designed on the principle of avoiding optical and computer effects, using the magic number four. All the sets, including the beach, are constructed on four-foot-tall stages, which come apart in four-foot segments. In this way, the Muppeteers can stand with their hands over their heads to operate their characters in the middle of the room. Tylenol is very big on Muppet sets.

There were four major sets for *MUPPETS IN SPACE* in Wilmington, N.C., each taking up an entire sound stage, each with its own unique problems. An ark was built for a large song and dance number. Gonzo is lonely so he has a dream about the flood. Noah will leave him behind because everyone else is boarding two by two but Gonzo is the only one of his kind.

According to Steve Marsh, "We have a wall on the ramp to hide the animal legs, or the lack of same. Then underneath we came up with an old trick, we put a piece of mir-

ror under the ramp so part of the ship is reflected back in that." The Muppeteers are able to stand behind the mirror, while their characters seem to board the ship.

Gonzo also spends some time alone on the roof of the Muppets' boarding house watching the stars with his little brass telescope. This set involves a lot of forced perspective to make an entire city of rooftops and trees appear behind the near full-size roof Gonzo and Rizzo the Rat sit and talk on. A large fan was kept on the figures, a movement in the air helps create the illusion they are outside.

The beach set where a gigantic spacecraft descends to meet Gonzo also involved forced perspective so rocks appeared as gigantic boulders and a five-foot lighthouse looks full height. The night sky was simulated with a very dark backdrop. Tiny shiny metal beads were struck on the drop with pins and when fans were turned on they sparkled, simulating the twinkling of stars.

The Electric Mayhem band makes an appearance on the beach with their bus. This is the original bus from the first movie, which they recovered from its new owner and painted in '60s psychedelic designs matching its original appearance.

According to Steve Marsh, "We move it by the poor man's process, you put black around the bus, then you have a couple of lights behind it move, and it looks like it's moving."

The spacecraft was built in California and looks a little like a turtle while descending but then opens up like a compact to reveal a circus. This was done optically with miniatures.

The band with unrecognizable instruments and other parts of the ship are individual little sets setup on the beach and manned by über-Gonzos—larger members of Gonzo's species—who, it turns out, are a traveling circus troop.

The two-story Muppet boarding house was especially difficult, not only because it has to come apart in sections, but also fixtures of each room had to be selected to represent the character that lives there.

ROOM SPACE

Muppets in the high-tech world of movies.

According to Steve Marsh, "The colors in his [Gonzo's] room, and other features of his choices throughout the film, when you see his family you understand his choices. They love what is bigger and brighter. We don't know that and he doesn't at the start of the film. We have these precursors to what we see at the end, it's really his previous existence."

In his and Rizzo's room Gonzo has a hammock, a photo enlarger, a small cannon, and his collection of *Poultry Babe* magazine. Rizzo's presence is shown by a small hammock and his autographed Mice Girl's poster.

Martha Pineau (*THE CROW*) is the set decorator who helped choose the furnishings, artwork, carpet, and accessories. As she explained it, the Mice Girl's poster developed directly from the storyline. "We just copy those little mouse girls, dress them in costumes for the costume department, created a back drop and photographed them."

Other props, like the fly-speckled wallpaper in Kermit's room, were created especially for the film, while Kermit's small painting of a swamp was probably bought in a high-end antique shop.

According to Pineau, "The whole production crew are marvelous people, they welcome creative ideas, they have rewritten scenes around the set pieces we have provided. The toilet is an American toilet, and what we have done is cover it in this very funny old fashioned fuzzy pink cover. They all walked in and saw the toilet and the bathroom with all kinds of quirky little inspirational things. Everyone just looked at the toilet and they were inspired to write a scene where fish are swimming about in the toilet bowl. Animal swishes his hair in the toilet and then he blow-dries his hair. The blow dryer literally blows him out the bathroom door over the banister and down into the dining room chair for breakfast."

Viewers will have a tour of the building during a big production number as we see each Muppet wake up. Ms. Piggy in her pink room throws a pillow at her alarm clock, while the giant Sweetums reaches



Brian Henson with Kermit the Frog, running the Muppet empire his late father created. "Our kind of entertainment won't go away," he said of movie puppetry.

out from his burlap covered bed and smashes his clock flat. Bunsen and Beaker sleep under a copy of the periodical table and are awakened by a steam-powered clock. Sam the Eagle has a patriotic painting while Fozzie the Bear's bedside table is covered with joke books and chattering teeth.

Everyone was very proud of the special stairway they built for the boarding house set. It is so carefully balanced that two people behind the wall can pull the steps into the wall. What happens is the camera will shoot up the staircase then move around so the stairs themselves are hidden behind the solid railing. The stairs are pulled out carefully while Sweetums, a man in a suit, is walking up them. The Muppet operators will be on a ramp under the retracted steps and will have their Muppets also walking up and down. It's a simple trick that allows the scene to be shot without a cut.

MUPPETS IN SPACE and ELMO IN GROUCHLAND (which opens in November) were produced almost back to back by Henson Films, a subsidiary of the Henson Company. Future projects include a script where the seven deadly sins—Gluttony, Avarice, Lust etc.—appear in person to a man considering suicide, and convince him to try life again, their way this time. Henson is partnered in the project with Saul Zaentz, producer of *AMADEUS*, *THE ENGLISH PATIENT*, and *ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST*.

"Saul is a legend," said Henson. "He is a fantastic producer. He does it the old fashioned way, raising money internationally and bringing it back to America."

Henson Pictures also has an option to the fantasy novel *Neverwhere* by the well-known author of *Sandman* comics, Neil Gaiman.

The Henson Company also has two new TV series' that premiered last March, *FARSCAPE* (on the SciFi Channel) and *FAMILY RULES* (on UPN). "FARSCAPE is the story of astronaut John Crichton [Ben Browder] whose one-man craft is accidentally hurled into unknown space," said Henson.

"Caught up in the middle of a space war, he becomes involved with the crew of a living space craft, and its crew including actors in special makeup, body suits, and one Muppet-like creature."

Noted Henson, "We also have a big pilot that is shooting in Vancouver that will support the prime time sensibility of the company. It hopefully will be on NBC. It's actually a horror series that people will see and say, 'It makes sense that it comes from the same company that makes FARSCAPE.' It's called *MASTER OF HORROR AND SUSPENSE*."

Despite all the advances in special effects, Henson doubts the Muppets or puppetry in general will be replaced by CGI. "The great thing about CGI is the options are limitless," said Henson. "That's also the worst thing because sometimes you need some restrictions to work under while creating. I think puppetry is a type of entertainment where you are not saying to the audience that these things are alive. The audience knows Kermit the Frog is felt and ping pong balls. That's part of why they love Kermit and Fozzie. They have very real, flawed personalities, but they are in these kind of goofy Muppet bodies. That's one kind of entertainment that I don't think will go away, and I think one reason it works so well is kids have stuffed animals in their house. It's sort of like an art form that comes out of the household and it's done very, very irreverent and funny." □

INSPECTOR GADGET

Music video director David Kellogg on filming the cartoon fantasy live action.

by Mitch Persons

Walt Disney Pictures' *INSPECTOR GADGET* is the latest in a string of animated TV comedies (*THE FLINTSTONES*, *GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE*, the upcoming *DUDLEY DO-RIGHT*) to make the transition to live action. *INSPECTOR GADGET*, written by Dana Olson, Kerry Khrin, Zak Penn, and Gary Ross, executive produced by Jon Avnet, Barry Bernardi, Jonathon Glickman and Aaron Myerson, and produced by Jordan Kerner, Roger Birnbaum, and Andy Heyward, stars Matthew Broderick as Gadget, Rupert Everett as Gadget's arch-nemesis, Sanford Scolex (alias The Claw), and Joely Fisher as Gadget's scientist girlfriend, Brenda Bradford.

The film weaves the far-out yarn of nerdy security officer John Brown (Broderick), who, after a freak accident, is restored to life with the aid of Bradford's skill. There is one small switch (pun intended) to Brown's resurrection. He becomes the repository of 14,000 automatic devices, turning him, as the creators of the film put it, "into a human Swiss Army Knife" called Inspector Gadget. Using his newfound ability as a robotic wonder, Gadget battles The Claw in the villain's relentless pursuit of world domination. Disney opens the film nationwide July 23.

INSPECTOR GADGET is the second feature for director David Kellogg. A veteran of TV commercials and music videos, Kellogg's first film was *COOL AS ICE* (1991), starring rap singer Vanilla Ice. The normally easygoing Kellogg bristles at the mere mention of that film, which was not too well received by either the critics or the general public.

"I don't know what you would call that movie," said Kellogg, not without some bitterness. "I guess it was a publicity stunt film, one that was trying to capitalize on a promi-



Kellogg directs Matthew Broderick as the Inspector, nerdy security officer John Brown who is restored to life as Gadget after a freak accident.

nent and popular performer. I think I got involved in it simply because I wasn't doing anything that week. It was a real quickie. I treated it like the music videos I had done. This one just happened to be a music video that went on for 100 minutes. But *COOL AS ICE* was a definite learning experience for me—I learned that I simply had to be more selective about what I picked to do. After I finished that film, I went back to commercials and videos. Then, of course, *INSPECTOR GADGET* came along, and, since I was a fan of the original cartoon series, I decided to put *COOL AS ICE* behind me and take on the Disney project.

"What I really liked about the whole concept of a cartoon like *GADGET* was that he and all the other characters could do things that nobody could do in real life. That may not sound like a big deal in an animated cartoon, but the animators could throw all these wild plot twists and devices into the show, yet they never let anything go outside the boundaries of what was scientifically possible. Even at the time the series was first on the air, a robotic crime-fighter was not such a far-out thing to imagine.

"We've taken those same ideas and contrivances and put them into our movie. There are Gadget's coiled spring feet, his helicopter hat, all these electronic tools flying out of his head, his arms. There are wild chases, and pratfalls, and hair-breadth escapes, everything.

"In the series, Don Adams was the voice of Gadget, and he brought something of his famous Maxwell Smart personality to the character—a guy who was dedicated and brave, but also more than just a little featherbrained. In our live version, Matthew Broderick plays the good inspector, still courageous, but just as addle-pated.

"Matthew was fantastic to work with. Gadget had to be played by an actor who had the ability to maintain a characterization while at the same time being aware that a can opener or blowtorch or laser beam could be shooting out of his arm or foot at some point. That was hardly an easy thing to do, since most of the gadgets themselves were added as CG effects after the live footage was shot. To give an example of Matthew's discipline, there was one scene where Gadget was sitting on a bench talking to someone, and it was a normal comic scene that would usually have taken just an hour to shoot, but because Gadget's arms extended, and stuff piled out of his hat, he could only carry the dialogue three words or so into a sentence before he had to change his hat, put a little interactive thing on, put another arm on, shoot three more words, then hold his arm out for the CG effect, and finally finish the sentence. That sequence took an entire day to film! And it was rough for Matthew. It would have been very easy for him to sort of goof around with people, but he stayed focused throughout, kept his character intact, and made that scene a terrifically funny one. I don't know



Broderick as Gadget trips the light fantastic with Joely Fisher as cybernetic scientist Brenda Bradford, who saves his life by turning him into a human Swiss Army Knife with 14,000 automatic devices.

how he did it. I was the director, and by the end of the day, I was sick of the shot.

"Rupert Everett, the man who played *The Claw*, also made a deep impression on me. He was a really intense guy, but he was also funny. He did all these funny little things. Rupert had no real special effects with his character, just a claw hand, but his performance was very effective.

"It's a good thing the acting in this film is top-notch. I'm a firm believer in acting, writing, and editing all kind of going together and making a cohesive, good film. You take away any one of those three elements, and you don't have a completed picture. I have to affirm, though, that I am most intrigued by the editing process. That is the one element out of the three that is uniquely film. It doesn't belong to any other entertainment medium, except maybe music, and that's all auditory. I was very fortunate in that I had Thom Noble, the Academy Award-winning editor, on this picture. In a comedy like this one, there are things that you can't write down on a piece of paper that Thom could do in the editing and have it come out funny. Editing is all about reactions, what you cut next to what, or what you put in between two other bits. So much of editing is deciding not to see someone, when to see someone, when to pull a reaction from some other moment, play it against this or that, and, if necessary, manipulate a performance.

"This is stuff that you can't really explain very well to peo-

ple, but I think it makes a whale of a difference in a good movie, especially with comedy, because a comedy depends so much on the value of good timing. Without the acting and the writing, where, in truth, the timing originates, there is nothing to work with, but without the editing, there is nothing to finish the work with.

"Things do change a lot in the editing, no doubt about it, but editing is not the only process in which ideas get shifted around. Sometimes the movie that emerges is an entirely different one than the one you started with. For *INSPECTOR GADGET*, I story-boarded everything out, I planned it one specific way, and then I shot it, and found certain limitations, and locations, and money, or whatever, that made it not quite the same. The actors saw things differently, or played things differently. I saw it happening in front of me, and then when I saw it on

Rupert Everett as Sanford Scolex, alias *The Claw*, *Gadget's* arch-nemesis. This latest in a string of animated TV comedies turned live action opens July 23.



“What I really liked about the concept of a cartoon like *GADGET* was that he could do things that nobody did in real life.”

—David Kellogg, Director—

film, it was not the same as when I was standing there, because of the size of the close-up, or the length of the long shot, or the position of the actors. Then when Rich Hoover, the man who did our CGI work, added his expert touch, *GADGET* appeared to come from some other source other than myself.

"But I'm really, really satisfied with this. Things have worked out so much better than I ever would have anticipated. I think, in a way, that is due to the fact that *INSPECTOR GADGET* is only my second picture. I knew enough to keep an open mind and listen to everybody. The way I approached directing this film, I was sort of at the hub of a wheel, and everyone was coming in from their different departments, directions, or responsibilities, trying to do their part, and I just sat in judgement in the middle, like, 'Yes, no, that'd be cool, don't you think?' I'm a pretty flexible guy anyway, and I listened to my people, let them contribute. I got some ideas from a 12-year-old girl that were as good as the ones that I got from the head of the studio. The actors, the man who was holding the boom, the script supervisor, they all had something to contribute. You can get overwhelmed by all of this cooperation, I suppose, and you have to be discriminating, but I would say that it was a good life lesson, and nobody really got in the way in any way.

"There was one experience, though, that was far from happy. Our production designer, Michael White, the same man who worked on *ARMAGEDDON*, committed suicide at Christmas-time. Michael had an amazing ability to take things that were vague and fanciful, like the asteroid in *ARMAGEDDON*, or the cartoon backgrounds in *INSPECTOR GADGET*, and turn them into concrete, believable, surroundings. This was a man who really, really worked hard, loved his work, and was so enthusiastic. It was never evident that he had something tragic going on in his life. When *INSPECTOR GADGET* debuts this summer, the film will be dedicated to him." □

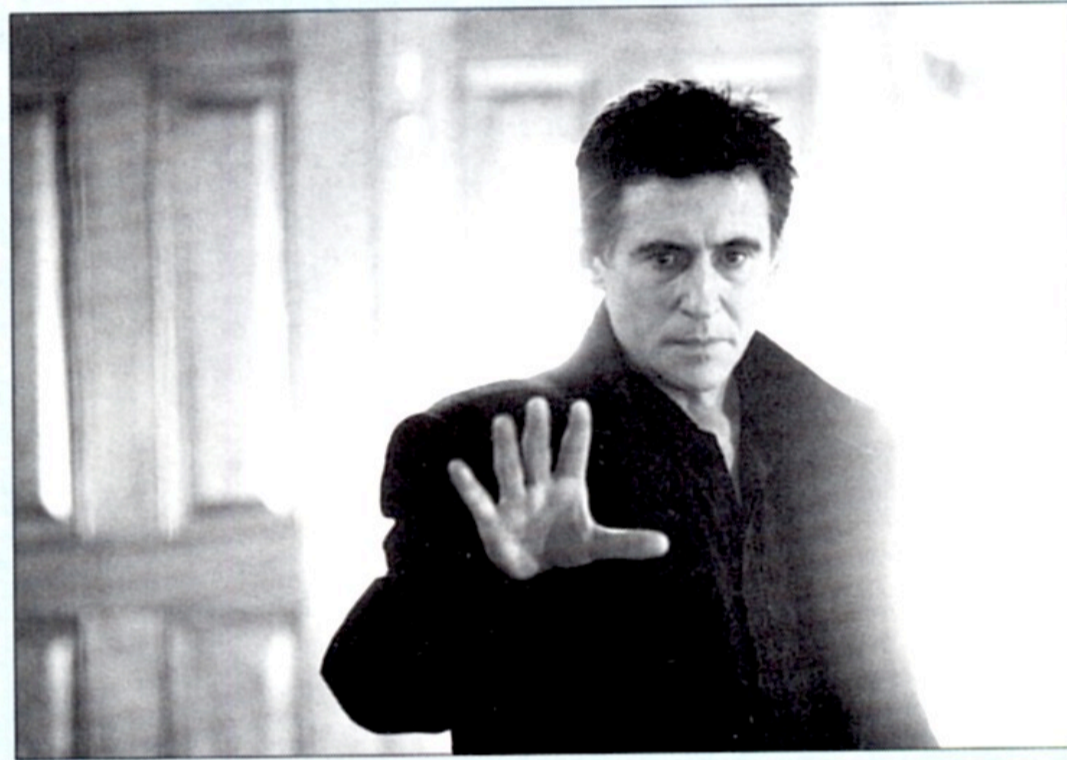
STIGMATA

Rupert Wainwright on directing Tom Lazarus' unique horror script for MGM.

By Dan Scapperotti

Early in the 13th century, St. Francis of Assisi was among the first to experience the phenomenon known as stigmata, an affliction in which the victim shows signs of the wounds inflicted on Jesus Christ during the Crucifixion without any medical reason. In fact, the stigmata was an important factor in St. Francis' canonization. When the affliction hit Bois d'Haine, the Belgian Academy of Medicine conducted a study and found no scientific way of explaining the wounds. MGM's *STIGMATA* stars Patricia Arquette as Frankie Paige, a young woman who suddenly finds herself painfully plagued by the affliction. She has visions that manifest themselves physically and becomes the focal point of a religious upheaval with her life on the line. MGM opens this unique horror nationwide on July 9.

Director Rupert Wainwright brought the project to producer Frank Mancuso Jr., the man responsible for the two *SPECIES* films. "I wanted to be a pilot, but I'm a chronic drunk so they wouldn't let me," laughed Wainwright explaining why he got into film. Actually, Wainwright was studying English literature at Oxford University when he acted in a couple of films. He played young Alice's boyfriend and husband in flashbacks in *DREAM CHILD*, the story of the woman who inspired Lewis Carroll's most famous character. "I did a bit of acting and I realized I didn't want to act in movies and I didn't want to direct theatre. I really wanted to direct movies. So I came to America because that is



Gabriel Byrne as Father Kiernan, an investigator from the Vatican who is summoned to authenticate manifestations of the crucifixion on a young girl.

where more movies come out of and I'd have a better chance. I came on a Fulbright Scholarship to UCLA to study film there and it's been downhill ever since."

Wainwright directed and co-wrote *THE SADNESS OF SEX*, a cultish comedy including animation and stop-motion which failed to find an audience. "It's a pretty surreal movie," he said. "Limited release in L.A. got great notices, but did no business at all."

Seven years ago, Wainwright read the original script for *STIGMATA* written by Tom Lazarus. "What attracted me to it in the first place was the fact that it was a very powerful piece of material," said Wainwright. "Very spiritual, very spooky, very extreme while at the same time very intelligent and that's what I like seeing in movies. It's extreme in that it takes one person's experience as an ordinary person sort of walking around Pittsburgh having an ordinary life and sudden-

ly they start receiving the wounds of God, of Christ. The hands and the feet and the head and the back and finally the spear. That's rather extreme to me."

Wainwright met with a group that had optioned the screenplay. They were unable to work out some of the script problems. When the option expired, Wainwright continued to pursue the project for five years. "No one really saw what was so powerful about it," the director admitted, "until I met Frank Mancuso Jr. who really responded to the idea at the heart of the movie." So impressed was Mancuso that he wanted to put the film into production as soon as possible. For nine months they worked on fine-tuning the script initially with Lazarus and then with writer Rick Ramage. "We sort of solved the writing issues as we went," said Wainwright. "Frank was very supportive. He's been there for the movie and for me and has got a lot of

ideas and at the same time he's very respectful of my ideas. It's been a very rewarding experience."

The film was shot mainly in Los Angeles with location shooting about a week each in San Francisco, Mexico and Rome for exteriors of the Vatican. "They weren't very keen on us getting inside," said Wainwright.

The director had worked with actress Patricia Arquette on the TV movie *DILLINGER*. No stranger to the genre, Arquette has appeared in such films as *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET III*, *ED WOOD* and David Lynch's *LOST HIGHWAY*. "What we were really looking for in Frankie was somebody who could play an ordinary person but at the same time give you a really compelling performance about the truth that lay behind the eye. About somebody who was, as it were, a poet or a prophet in waiting. There is an intelligence about all of Patricia's performances as well as a strong sympathetic emotional quality that really draws you into her. She's very intelligent, very beautiful, very sympathetic and she can play rough and tough. We wanted a real flesh and blood character." The role was demanding both emotionally and physically. It involved a good deal of puking, writhing around and being attacked. To say nothing of the levitation.

"Our levitation is very straightforward," said Wainwright. "She's on a bed. The bed disappears and then she just starts slowly drifting up. She's lying flat and suddenly she flips up to a crucifix position, bleeding at the same time. It took a



Patricia Arquette as Frankie, a modern-day prophet whose manifestation of the stigmata heralds the discovery of a new Gospel the Vatican wants to suppress.

long time to film and most of it is Patricia but we also used a stunt person and body doubles and things like that because it is very exhausting to do. It's somewhat painful as well. It isn't that she's just been hovering in mid air, she has to flip from lying horizontal to lying vertical with her arms flying out to the side. It's one of those things that if you do it wrong you can really injure somebody."

As Frankie's condition worsens she seeks help from doctors and psychologists who are unable to explain the weird manifestation. An encounter with a local priest is caught on tape which is sent to the Vatican in Rome to study the spiritual implications. The Vatican decides to send it's own investigator in the person of Father Kiernan, played by Gabriel Byrne. "His role is a very interesting one indeed," said Wainwright. "In the Vatican they have various divisions which they call congregations. He works for the Sacred Congregation of the Causes of the Saints. This is a division that tries to decide who should be made a saint. Under that purview also comes the question of what is a miracle and what is not a miracle. So if someone reports a miracle, the Vatican sends out one of it's priests from the Congregation of the Causes of the Saints to try and decide if it is a miracle or not and that's what Gabriel's job is. These people also have a scientific background as well as

a religious one.

"What we were looking for was someone who was very intelligent, very emotional and very physically good looking. Gabriel has a really strong silent sexiness to him and obviously a great deal of intelligence and in his own way a very warm character. That's a real division. Obviously when they decide someone is going to become a saint one of the things they do is send out one priest to bring the information back and, before it comes to the Vatican they investigate it with the local bishop. If it gets seen to be serious then the Congregation of the Cause of the Saints gather and investigate each one in turn and then makes an informed recommendation to the Pope who finally decides if a person becomes a saint or not."

Father Kiernan and his superior, Cardinal Houseman, are at

Arquette has a stigmata attack on a subway car that goes out of control. Wainwright found a backer for the project in MGM producer Frank Mancuso.



"I'm not interested in doing your standard cop movies," said Wainwright. "I think horror fans will find there is a lot in this movie above and beyond a quick jolt."

odds with one another. While Kiernan wants to resume his work in Brazil, Houseman undermines him and assigns the young priest to Pittsburgh to investigate the latest case of stigmata. Veteran stage and film performer Jonathan Pryce plays the wily cardinal. "He brings a lot of menace to a role in the right way without having to play it up," said Wainwright of the actor. "What's so great about Jonathan is that he's the Cardinal who is the head of the Causes of the Saints. He gets to decide what gets moved along and who goes where. The McGuffin of the story is that there is a new gospel that has turned up which may or may not supersede all the gospels that the Church has. So when Jonathan finds out about that he tries to control it and suppress it. He actually has a very fascinating role to play. It's not a traditional bad guy heavy. We wanted someone who was very intelligent, very powerful as an actor but would really bring to life the nuances of a character like this."

There are two dangers facing Frankie in the film. The most obvious being the stigmata attacks that are so overwhelmingly painful and powerful that she's in danger of dying from each one. Her second danger

comes from Houseman and a rough faction in the Vatican who want to prevent her from revealing the message about the new gospel.

The film has its share of both special visual effects and makeup effects. Ve Neill, who won Oscars for makeup in *ED WOOD* and *MRS. DOUBTFIRE*, supervised the makeup effects. Tim McGovern was the special effects supervisor on the film. He had also worked on the effects for the Dean Koontz adaptation *HIDEAWAY*. "There is a ghost," explained Wainwright. "The ghost of the translator but you see him in mirrors and you see him through fire and through natural occurrences like water and wind and things like that."

"There is a scene at the end when Gabriel drives the spirit of the priest out of her and at that point fire engulfs the whole room," said Wainwright. "That's a very powerful scene and that was all done with blue screen and motion control and matting everything together. The exorcism was very hard because we had to deal with another character coming out of her."

The main focus of the film, however, remains the manifestations that plague Frankie. "The stigmata attacks are our main set pieces," said Wainwright, "and there are five of those." Frankie is in a bathtub when the first attack occurs. Later she's on a subway train that goes out of control.

"I look for movies that are kind of extreme, unique, very powerful and emotionally moving," said Wainwright. "I think this movie is all of those. I'm not interested in doing your standard cop movies and that sort of stuff. It's aimed at horror movie buffs and people who like a really good thriller. I think the horror fans will find that there is a lot in this movie above and beyond just a quick jolt." □

CRUSADE

The doomed sequel series to **BABYLON 5** premieres on TNT.

By Frank Garcia

The creators of groundbreaking science fiction saga **BABYLON 5**—John Copeland, Douglas Netter and visionary extraordinaire, J. Michael Straczynski—set out to demonstrate that drama and conflict on a galactic scale could continue in **CRUSADE**, their new TNT sequel series.

In what they hoped would become another wondrous five-year journey, Straczynski and his colleagues took a bold step to tell another fantastic tale with new characters and situations within the **Babylon 5** universe. The prologue of what is effectively “Book Two” was screened last January in **A CALL TO ARMS**, a TNT network-produced **BABYLON 5** movie. The first chapter in this new saga is an episode titled “War Zone.”

When the new saga airs this June, **CRUSADE** will have the benefit of a national network like TNT, a built-in loyal viewing audience and an accessible timeslot, to give the series a successful launch. Too bad TNT cancelled the production of further episodes before the first 13 shows have even aired (see page 59).

According to series producer



Peter Woodward, son of **EQUALIZER** Edward Woodward, plays the enigmatic Galen, a Technomage who joins the Excalibur crew.

John Copeland, **CRUSADE** takes place five years after the end of **BABYLON 5**. When “Earth is infected with a ‘nanovirus’ that will eventually adapt to our physiology and kill every living thing on the planet unless a cure is found. The crew of the Excalibur, a prototype starship, is given the task of searching the galaxy for clues to the cure.”

With a chilling, threatening doom facing humanity, a team of four key figures are quickly assembled and in **CRUSADE** they will propel the adventure

into deep space. As Captain Matthew Gideon, Gary Cole strides onto the bridge of the Excalibur. As the ships’ executive officer, Daniel Dae Kim is Lt. John Matheson, the ship’s resident telepath. As the ship’s science and medical officer, Dr. Susan Chambers, Marjean Holden is most familiar to audiences as Sheeva in **MORTAL COMBAT: ANNIHILATION!** (1997).

Another character introduced to B5 audiences in **A CALL TO ARMS** was Dureena Nafeel, the last of her species, an alien thief played by Carrie Dobro. Dureena’s world was destroyed during the Shadow war as established in **CALL TO ARMS**. She’s out for revenge for anyone who helped the Shadows. Dobro is familiar to **BABYLON 5** audiences. She’s had two previous appearances aboard the space station as different characters. In “Exogenesis” she was Dr. Harrison and in “Racing Mars” she was a Brakiri alien.

As the archaeologist and linguist Max Eilerson from **Interplanetary Expeditions (IPX)**, David Allen Brooks has appeared in such films as **THE KINDRED** (1986) and **THE DOORS** (1991).

CRUSADE is also a platform to explore a strange, mys-



The prototype starship Excalibur.

terious race known as the Technomages. We’ve seen their race only once before, in **BABYLON 5**’s second season episode, “The Geometry of Shadows.” As the enigmatic Galen, a Technomage, Peter Woodward joins the team. Like Dureena, Galen made his first appearance in the B5 universe with an important supporting role in **A CALL TO ARMS**. Peter is a 43-year-old actor who has a versatile background as a writer, producer and a fight arranger in Hollywood. Peter is actually the son of veteran actor Edward Woodward (**THE EQUALIZER**), who guest stars in one episode as another Technomage.

“This group of folks got along right from day one,” said Copeland. “There was a chemistry between them on the set, in their performances that you normally don’t see early on. Usually it takes three or four episodes before everyone settles in. But you could see the chemistry starting to happen on the first week of filming. It’s just gotten better. They work well with each other. I think the performances are pretty exciting.”

Also appearing for 13 episodes on **CRUSADE** is actress Tracy Scoggins reprising her role as Captain Elizabeth



Like BABYLON 5, CRUSADE features state-of-the-art CGI visual effects.

Lochley. "Our plan is to go back to Babylon 5 on occasion," Copeland explains. In one instance, Lochley boards the Excalibur in the midst of a space battle. "They respond to her distress beacon aboard the Starfury. She and Gideon meet and there is going to be a relationship between those two," he added.

Although the Excalibur is exploring the cosmos, the producers plan for original BABYLON 5 characters to occasionally appear as guest stars on the show and Copeland confirms that Richard Biggs has already filmed one segment. Appearances are subject to the actors' schedules and availability.

"All the characters that you will meet will continue to evolve just as every one of the characters did on BABYLON 5," noted Copeland. "This is not the same kind of a saga as BABYLON 5 was, about the life and fall of empires. This is about a specific thing. As a result the episodes will be much more self-contained. People won't have to worry that if they missed five or six episodes, they won't know what's going on. It's much more stand-alone and episodic in nature. But you'll still see a lot of things that people gravitated towards

BABYLON 5—the great characters, the way the characters changed. All sorts of personal trials and how they're altered by that experience. That's just the way Joe writes."

There will be a major "story arc" to CRUSADE, but nowhere as stringent as BABYLON 5. That means we won't be seeing Straczynski engaging in wild marathon writing sessions as he's done for BABY-

JOHN COPELAND, PRODUCER

"One of the things that remains consistent [about] the way Joe [Straczynski] tells stories, is that nothing is as it appears to be. There's always that element of surprise."

LON 5. It means there will be more room for other writers to enter the sandbox and play. Straczynski will probably only write half of the season's shows. Screenwriter and novelist Peter David, who wrote two B5 episodes, returns to the universe with a CRUSADE script. Babylonian's Reference Editor Fiona Avery has turned her talents to teleplay writing and sold a spec script that was immediately snatched up by the company. She will have her name attached to two episodes, "The Well of Forever" and "Patterns of the Soul."

If viewers are coming to the show expecting a BABYLON 5 clone, Copeland forewarns this will not be the case. "This show is a completely different feeling from BABYLON 5. In B5, our characters for the most part, were in a place populated among thousands of other aliens and humans on the station. But this one, they're on a very large mission to save humanity. It puts a different kind of an edge to each of the characters. They

all have very interesting pasts; they have their own baggage they're bringing with them. There's friction between characters. They don't see eye-to-eye because they're all very strong personalities. It comes across that they all can rely upon each other."

If viewers think they can sit back and relax throughout the series' history, waiting for the final episode in which humanity is saved from the threatening "nanovirus," Copeland shakes his head. "I would be very surprised if it is that straightforward," he said. "One of the things that I think remains consistent [about] the way that Joe tells stories, is that nothing is as it appears to be. There's always going to be that element of surprise."

Pitching CRUSADE to the network began late into BABYLON 5's fourth season, said Copeland. This was in the period when no one knew if the series would be renewed for a fifth season. And the actual series order didn't materialize un-

The crew of the Excalibur (l to r): Woodward, Gary Cole as Captain Matthew Gideon, Tracy Scoggins, Marjean Holden as Dr. Chambers, (seated) Carrie Dobro as Dureena Nafeel, David Allen Brooks and Daniel Dae Kim as Lt. Matheson.





Introducing the Excalibur crew in "War Zone," the series' origin pilot, which was actually the fifth episode to be filmed.

til they were well into fifth season production. Copeland says that the series loomed ahead of them in February 1998. "It wasn't so much a time of celebration as we were still in production on the last season of B5 and we would have two B5 TV movies to do afterwards," explained Copeland. "We didn't make a big deal of it at that stage, as for the most part, the cast of B5 wouldn't be involved with CRUSADE on a regular basis. That tempered, for me at least, some of the elation. It was great to know that we were getting to finish the five year B5 story and that we were given the opportunity to embark on a new storyline within the B5 universe. However, at the same time, it meant that B5 was over as a series and when anything comes to an end it makes one a little wistful."

Production began August 3, 1998 and as the cameras rolled, approximately 70% of the original B5 crew who were there from "day one" loyally stayed on. Copeland says that the first few days of filming "was one of excitement. We were all excited about embarking on a new show. We still have a large majority of the crew that started with us on the first season of BABYLON 5, so the mix of old and new was a

friendly collaborative experience. From the first day, on film, we could see the dynamic that the actors were going to develop as they became more familiar with their characters."

A number of significant changes, however, are being made to keep the proceedings lively, interesting and pushed into a fresh direction. Changes begin with the series' visual look. Fred Murphy takes over as the series' cinematographer, picking up the lens from John Flinn III who was BABYLON 5's director of photography. "John had been doing this for five years and he wanted to get outside and see the blue sky again. He went on to other shows," explained Copeland.

"When John would prepare to direct episodes for BABYLON 5, Fred would shoot for us. Fred actually shot 'Severed Dreams,' Fred's also DOP on 'River of Souls' and also 'A Call to Arms.'"

Like its predecessor, state-of-the-art computer generated special effects will become CRUSADE'S signature. "The special effects we are creating for CRUSADE are stunning," grinned Copeland. "We're doing a lot more 'virtual sets' and environmental type of visual effects than we did in the past with BABYLON 5. We are varying the camera styles, the way it moves. The way we frame things in shots. The same as the live action with the visual effects in it. It's really integrated."

Aliens from "Visitors from Down the Street," an X-FILES take-off in which the Excalibur crew are investigated by government agents on another planet.



Examples of B5's environmental visuals included visits to Mars, Centauri Prime and the planetary surface of the Shadow's homeworld, Z'ha'dum.

"We didn't want to fall into the trap that a lot of science fiction shows have gone, which is you wind up going to different locations here in Los Angeles—Vasquez Rocks or Griffith Park. You make it sort of alien but it's not because the plant life looks like Earth and the sky looks like Earth and we want things to look very different."

In television there are usually two different approaches of creating introduction or "pilot" stories. One is an "origin" episode where we witness the beginning of the series' premise. The other is the "typical episode" where we see the characters and situations as if it was an ordinary episode, and perhaps as the series developed, we slowly learned the backstories of characters and situations. Initially, all the parties involved with CRUSADE picked the latter approach. But upon further thought, an origin episode was commissioned when the series was already about five episodes "in the can."

John Copeland explained, "In discussions with Warner Bros. and TNT, they said, 'You know, there's a certain value to showing how all these folks got together. It also demonstrates how they reacted to each other initially with their personalities. It gives you a point of departure for how those relationships changed.' We thought about it and said, 'That's an interesting idea! We'll shoot a new first episode.' We decided to go back to an origin episode. This sets a whole bunch of things firmly in place. It would have been things we would have dealt with in the course of the season. Probably as flashbacks. It puts everyone together and gets us off and rolling."

The original introductory episode, "Racing in the Night," which took place about five months into the Crusade mission was replaced by the new origin story, "War Zone." If ratings are high, TNT might pick-up further shows, or a sale could be made to other networks. □

A CALL TO ARMS

Why did TNT cancel their order for the new series before it even had a chance to air any episodes?

By Frank Garcia

Has the time arrived for SF fans to assemble a Ranger corps of fans to rally the television viewing public into "a call to arms?" Is it time for them to embark on a new "crusade" to save from extinction an unseen, promising SF television series that takes place in the BABYLON 5 universe?

Last spring, the TNT network cancelled CRUSADE, the new series spin-off from BABYLON 5, halfway through its 22 episode mandate.

Beginning this month, TNT will broadcast the completed 13 episodes of the series. If ratings are good, there may be an order for a second season, but the prospects are dim.

Series producer John Copeland refused to discuss the reasons behind the cancellation except to say that this was common in the television industry. "[TNT] had the right, at the end of the 13 episodes to say, 'We don't want to do any more,'" he said. "I'm not going to get into those events or talk about that."

Copeland does acknowledge, however, that the timing of the cancellation is unusual. "It's odd that we are here in this situation with a show that has not been on the air yet, and doesn't have the judgment of an audience behind it."

Filming first began in September 1998, but in the mid-stream of production, a three-week hiatus to upgrade sets and costumes brought the cameras to a screeching halt. With the new refurbishments installed, cast and crew restarted at end of October, 1998. But in the middle of February, the TNT network distributor decided they no longer wanted the series.

The series once again was placed on an enforced hiatus while Warner Brothers Television, which owns CRUSADE, and Babylonian Productions, who created the series, "shopped around" the property for another distributor. Said Copeland, "The Sci-Fi Channel was a very obvious choice and they expressed a very strong interest in the show." However, after approximately



BABYLON 5 and CRUSADE series creator J. Michael Straczynski, who reportedly rebuffed TNT's demands to "dumb down" the new show for mass consumption.

two weeks of intense negotiations and accounting gymnastics with their budgets, Sci-Fi Channel could not allocate their funds to purchase the show. Sci-Fi Channel also wanted to invest in a series in which they co-owned, but CRUSADE and B5 are totally owned by Warner Brothers.

"Sci-Fi Channel was not the only option," said Copeland who referred to two unnamed distribution outlets that were also considered. "The business of entertainment is driven by budgets," Copeland explained as to why there hasn't been a stampede by other sources to pound on CRUSADE's door to purchase the series. "[It's difficult] for anyone to pick up a show at this point where their capital expenditure budgets for the year have been spoken for. They ear-

mark funds for certain activities and all of a sudden they have [CRUSADE] coming out of left field. And they have to see where the money comes from."

All the materials, sets and designs for the show have been put into storage. Cast and crew were released from their contracts and were free to pursue other projects.

Is CRUSADE truly dead? Or can a resurrection be mounted? "After the show has been aired this summer, if the ratings are there, if viewers tune in and stick with the show, then something may happen with CRUSADE in the future," says Copeland. "Obviously, ratings are the key to the success of any show. For any interest to be reactivated, by any potential buyer, there has to be an audience there."

With so many channels available on the television dial, viewers' attention spans have shortened, and thus ratings have perilously fragmented. Today, if SLIDERS gets a 1.0 rating for Sci-Fi Channel, it's considered a big success. This means that even with a small audience, TNT may reconsider their cancellation if the numbers are sufficiently compelling. What is encouraging is that "A Call for Arms" the latest B5 movie which served as a lead-in for CRUSADE garnered very good ratings in its January 1999 premiere.

Should fans be rallying a letter-writing campaign to ensure a future for this show if they like what they see during the 13 weeks? "The best thing for everyone to do is tune in and watch the show and make sure the ratings are good. That's the watershed mark," says Copeland. "A letterwriting campaign and all that may give folks some satisfaction that they're doing something, but I don't think that's going to have any effect at this point in time [in early March]. When the show gets on the air, it may be a different story."

In the meantime, J. Michael Straczynski had seven offers for network pilots and overall deals from other networks and companies sitting on his desk when BABYLON 5 finished its run. He's now going to pick up two or three of those projects. What is known at press time is that one was an offer to executive produce a non-SF genre movie of the week. □

FILM RATINGS

- Must see
- Excellent
- Good
- Mediocre
- Fodder for MST-3K

EXISTENZ

Writer-director: David Cronenberg. Dimension, 4/99. 97 mins. R. With: Jennifer Jason Leigh, Jude Law, Ian Holm, Willem Dafoe.

David Cronenberg's work has always been strange and fascinating, weird and repulsive, imaginative and thoughtful—but above all, *serious*. Certainly, a dark sense of irony runs through his work, as his emotionally disengaged characters casually encounter phenomena that would send an average person into fits of hysteria; but this has always been a counterpoint to his main themes. Nor is his latest film an outright comedy, but this time the humorous counterpoint is more fully developed. Without sacrificing any of the thoughtfulness we've come to expect from him, he revisits familiar themes with a certain knowing self-awareness that provokes conspiratorial laughter from fans. Elements that once would have been subtext (the sexual connotations of virtual reality game-playing, which requires a bio-organic unit plugged into a hole to the spinal column) are so open and obvious that one has to chuckle. Cronenberg also makes some jokey references to *THE X-FILES* ("Trust no one!" insists Christopher Eccleston's dying character) and *THE GAME* (the designer of eXistenZ insists that one must play her new game in order to learn the object of the game). Is Cronenberg admitting that he is no longer dealing with unique ideas, or is he reminding us that these other artists were probably influenced by him?

The plot involves a *fatwa* (i.e., assassination order, *a la* author Salman Rushdie) against the designer of a new virtual reality game called eXistenZ (Leigh), who goes on the run with her PR man (Law), and then must enter the cyberspace world she created, in order to see whether it has been damaged in the attempt on her life. Cronenberg has lots of fun with the VR characters, who either freeze up or zone out when the players don't speak the right cue lines to advance the action; the result is a paradox of formula film plotting, in which convenient characters show up at appropriate moments to help the lead characters to the next scene.

Being the existentialist he is, Cronenberg can't resist taking the next step, suggesting that this arbitrary world isn't very different from real life; by the conclusion, he has blurred any distinction to the point where the characters themselves aren't sure whether they are still just playing a game. It's all very clever and amusing, but in a way less affecting than the big-budget Hollywood treatment of similar ideas in *THE MATRIX*. In Cronenberg's universe, there's nothing particularly sacred about "Reality," so being trapped in a cyberspace world is not a tragedy. ●●● Steve Biodrowski



In *THE MUMMY*, mercenary Rick O'Connell (Brendan Fraser) and librarian Evelyn (Rachel Weisz) confront a skeletal warrior, rendered in CGI.

GAMERA 3: THE REVENGE OF IRIS

Director: Shusuke Kaneko. Writer: Kazunori Ito. Daei, reviewed at the Disney Screening Room 4/99. 110 mins. Subtitled. Not rated. With: Shinobu Nakayama, Ayako Fujitani, Yukijiro Hotaru.

A letdown from the high standard established by *GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE*, this sequel returns elements of its predecessor and comes across like a remake of rival series entry *GODZILLA VS SPACE GODZILLA*, to boot (focusing on a revenge plot). The ambitious script is filled with interesting ideas, but it's too convoluted. The special effects, including impressive CGI, are great, but too few and far between. Still the initial monster battle puts the whole of the TriStar *Godzilla* to shame. ●● Steve Biodrowski

IDLE HANDS

Director: Rodman Flender. Writers: Terri Hughes & Ron Milbauer. Columbia, 4/99. 92 mins. R. With: Devon Sawa, Seth Green, Elden Henson, Vivica A. Fox.

A complete surprise, this slasher comedy is easily the best thing to surface in the wake of the post-*SCREAM* resurgence in teen horror. Like Kevin Williamson, scripters Terri Hughes & Ron Milbauer cast a winking eye on genre clichés; unlike Williamson, they don't belabor the point with endless dialogue about those clichés—they just get on with the fucking movie.

Horror enthusiasts will recognize sequences lifted almost intact from *EVIL DEAD II*, *DEMONS*, and *DEATH BECOMES HER*; but hey, it's all good material that can stand another workout, especially when performed by a talented cast (Sawa, Green, and Henson) who almost always hit the funny bone. Even director Flender, who was notably inept at blending fear and laughter in *LEPRACHAUN 2*, rises to the occasion. The film is seldom suspenseful, but the jump-scares are there, and the gross-out images (courtesy of Greg Cannom's makeup) are carefully pushed over-the-top and into the comic stratosphere. The energy sometimes sputters, but always recovers. The result is delightful popcorn entertainment. ●● 1/2 Steve Biodrowski

LUCINDA'S SPELL

Writer-Director: Jon Jacobs. Screened at the Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood, 4/99. 93 mins. Unrated. With: Jon Jacobs, Christina Fulton.

This follow-up from writer-director-actor Jon Jacobs is a bit of a letdown after the promise of *THE GIRL WITH THE HUNGRY EYES*. In attempting to break out of the midnight market and reach a wider audience, he has sacrificed much of the outrageousness that gave his earlier effort its jolt. Christina Fulton again takes the lead role (as a would-be witch barred from the local coven because she makes her living as a prostitute); sadly, her amusingly over-the-top antics are less appropriate in a film that strives for compassion instead of camp, sentiment instead of shock. The story is loose, and the running time would benefit from judicious trimming. On the plus side, the New Orleans locations are effectively atmospheric, and the finale (a spell-casting contest between the rival witches) offers more in the way of what we expect from low-budget genre filmmaking, including an unbelievable sight gag involving a satyr who meets his match in the jaws of a sexually insatiable witch. ● Jay Stevenson

THE MUMMY

Director: Stephen Somers. Screenplay: Somers, based on a script by John L. Balderston. Universal, 5/99. 106 mins. PG-13. With: Brendan Fraser, Rachel Weisz, Arnold Vosloo, John Hannah.

Stephen Somers' loose remake of *THE MUMMY* is an anonymous piece of studio factory filmmaking—more extravagant than *DEEP RISING* (his previous effort), but also more overdone and less funny. The basic formula remains the same: place a bunch of generic characters in a situation overrun with CGI monsters, and have them crack wise in between firing bullets and running away. Neither film was very suspenseful, but at least *RISING* was fun in a tongue-in-cheek manner suitable to a convoluted high-seas action flick combining mercenaries and monsters. *THE MUMMY*, on the other hand, wants to be an epic romantic adventure, and in the period setting, the

one-liners tend to fall flat. The actors try hard, but Fraser is miscast as a tough-guy hero, and Weisz is neither exotic nor voluptuous enough to replace Zita Johann or the many Hammer damsels menaced by mummies.

Also, the film gives *GODZILLA* a run for its money as the "remake that ignores the original concept in favor of a pastiche of a contemporary blockbuster." In this case, the film has less to do with Imhotep than Indiana Jones: the RAIDERS-type action sequences are all adequately entertaining (if not outstanding), but they distract from the horror element, and the film winds up abandoning most of the moody poetry that was inherent in the material.

● 1/2 Steve Biodrowski

NEW ROSE HOTEL

Director: Able Ferrara. Screenplay: Ferrara & Christi Zois, from the story by William Gibson. Reviewed at the Harmony Gold Screening Room. 92 mins. Unrated. With: Christopher Walken, Asia Argento, Willem Dafoe, Annabella Sciorra.

The latest effort from the auteur of *THE BAD LIEUTENANT* has had trouble finding U.S. distribution, and it's not hard to see why: although interesting in its individual elements, said element don't add up to a coherent work. Walken is fun to watch, but apparently much of his dialogue was improvised in front of the camera, and as entertaining as it is, it doesn't always advance the plot, about two headhunters who use an attractive woman to lure a scientist away from his current employer and into the arms of a rival corporation. Everything turns to disaster when the bait (Argento) double-crosses her partners and (apparently) arranges the assassination of the scientist. The conclusion, with Dafoe huddle in a tiny cubicle in the titular hotel and reliving the entire story in his head—an extended flashback—is supposed to evoke a sense of tragedy, but we simply aren't involved enough with the characters to care. ● Steve Biodrowski

THE STENDHAL SYNDROME

Writer-Director: Dario Argento. Troma, 6/99. 120 mins. Unrated. With: Asia Argento, Marco Leonardi, Thomas Kretschmann.

Three years after first being reviewed in *CFQ* 27:10, Dario Argento's thriller finally reached U.S. shores in an art house release courtesy of schlockmeisters Troma Films. You have to give Argento credit for his uncompromising approach to some truly disturbing material, but the old visual flair is only sporadically on display, with the result that some of the over-the-top moments seem out of place. (CGI images of pills descending into a stomach or a bullet piercing a cheek are more appropriate to high camp than serious thrills.) The central idea is an interesting one (that violence can be like an infection, and when victims turn the tables, they may become too much like their attackers), but the pace is slow and the storytelling is weak. Not that story was ever the strength in Argento's work, but he tries to make it the main feature here—a laudable attempt, but alas, for him a misguided one. ● Steve Biodrowski

STAR WARS

THE PHANTOM MENACE

Falls far short of Lucas' alleged mythic intent.

By Steve Biodrowski

There's something wrong when the loudest applause occurs as the curtain goes up—in anticipation of, rather than response to, the film being seen. That's the case with *THE PHANTOM MENACE*, the highly-hyped *STAR WARS* prequel that gives *GODZILLA* a run for its money as an over-anticipated disappointment. The audience—after a masterfully orchestrated promotional campaign, after months of trailers and weeks of commercials and cover stories, after waiting in line for days to buy tickets and for hours to get a seat—has been led to expect that this is *the* major event of the year. With that kind of build-up, the excitement in the theatre is almost palpable as the lights go down. There's only one problem: the film has to deliver.

THE PHANTOM MENACE falls short in this regard. It is not a bad film—certainly not the disaster that was *RETURN OF THE JEDI*. But in a classic case of the tail wagging the dog, more creativity has been lavished on getting you into the theatre than on pleasing you once you get there. The story starts well, with the Trade Federation's blockade of planet Naboo; for a time, it seems as if Lucas is taking a page from Frank Herbert's *Dune*, with his handling of political machinations in a science fiction context. Soon, however, trouble arises from the fact that the audience is well ahead of the characters. We already know that Senator Palpatine is the "phantom menace" of the title, manipulating the Federation to his own ends—despite the fact that Lucas keeps his face hidden when he appears as a Sith Lord to his Federation stooges.

Despite this built-in predictability, the film maintains initial inter-

est thanks to Liam Neeson and Ewan McGregor, who make as dashing a pair of Jedi Knights as one could wish. But after they sneak the Queen off of her besieged planet, the momentum drags. The problem is that Lucas now has to tie these events into the storyline of the original trilogy, so he spends time introducing characters (R2D2, Jabba the Hut, C-3PO, and of course Anakin Skywalker) who contribute little to this new story. (In a rare surprise, C-3PO turns out to have been created on Tatooine by Anakin. So why doesn't he recognize his home planet when he lands in *STAR WARS*? I'm sure we'll hear an explanation later, about as convincing as Obi Wan's "I was telling you the truth" speech in *JEDI*.)

In effect, the plot becomes a mere prologue, relying for its impact not on anything exciting in itself but on the connections to *STAR WARS*. Thus Obi Wan promises to train Anakin as a Jedi, and Palpatine promises to keep an eye on his progress—trivial scenes that are supposed to resonate deeply because of the story we already know.

But let's face it: no one expected



Jake Lloyd as Anakin Skywalker bids farewell to his mom on Tatooine. No one expected great drama, but Lucas has lost whatever touch he had with actors.

great drama; we wanted all the exuberance of flying through space and battling evil that \$100-million could buy. In this regard, the film delivers—at intervals. Space ships and interstellar travel are portrayed to excellent effect, but the momentum never builds, thanks to a screen time padded past two hours and ten minutes—a lethargic pace that lags behind the original's quick tempo.

Elsewhere, the ubiquitous computer effects are meant to be impressive for their own sake: as each new creature appears, we are supposed to react in awe: "Look, another digitally created character!" However, these animated actors look too much like what they are: computer-generated cartoons. It's as if *ANTZ* and *A BUG'S LIFE* were trying to pass off their outtakes as part of a live-action film. Aggravating matters, these technical marvels strike a decidedly juvenile tone that falls far short of Lucas' alleged mythic aspirations. The villains are mostly robots, so no one will be offended at seeing them blown up by a little boy. And Jar Jar Binks, the film's equivalent of Chewbacca, is merely exasperating,

Jar Jar Binks, the film's exasperatingly juvenile CGI equivalent of Chewbacca, using high tech to save Lucas the trouble of having to write coherent dialogue.



his comedy relief gibberish supposedly funny just because it is gibberish. As with Chewbacca, this saves Lucas from having to write coherent dialogue. We always knew what the Wookiee was saying, however, thanks to Han Solo's responses. With Jar Jar, we're just left shaking our heads, even when we do catch the occasional recognizable phrase.

Having not directed since *STAR WARS*, Lucas has lost whatever touch he had with actors. With solid professionals (including Terence Stamp, wasted in a bit), this causes no problem, but the younger cast suffers. Jake Lloyd is a stiff. Natalie Portman is regal in her Queen regalia but lifeless when posing in her alter ego role as the Queen's handmaid. (And what's up with those ridiculous outfits that suggest not a galaxy far, far away but a Halloween drag parade in West Hollywood?)

Not surprisingly, the film comes to life mostly when characterization takes a back seat to action. Highlights include Anakin's triumph in the pod race—a science fiction update on *BEN HUR*'s famous chariot race; and the final light saber duel against Darth Maul is outstanding. But even the visuals are often derivative: for the second time, the devilish villain falls to his death down a bottomless tunnel; and for the third time the climax involves an aerial attack that explodes a massive enemy target in outer space.

Even the exciting moments—and there are many—fail to lift the film above mid-level quality. The applause as the curtain goes down has an obligatory air, as people try to convince themselves that they haven't been too disappointed. They deserved much more than they got. They deserved a great movie designed for the ten-year-old in us all, not a film designed for ten-year-olds. □

RESURRECTION: Gus Van Sant, Auteur of "PSYCHO"

By Steve Biodrowski

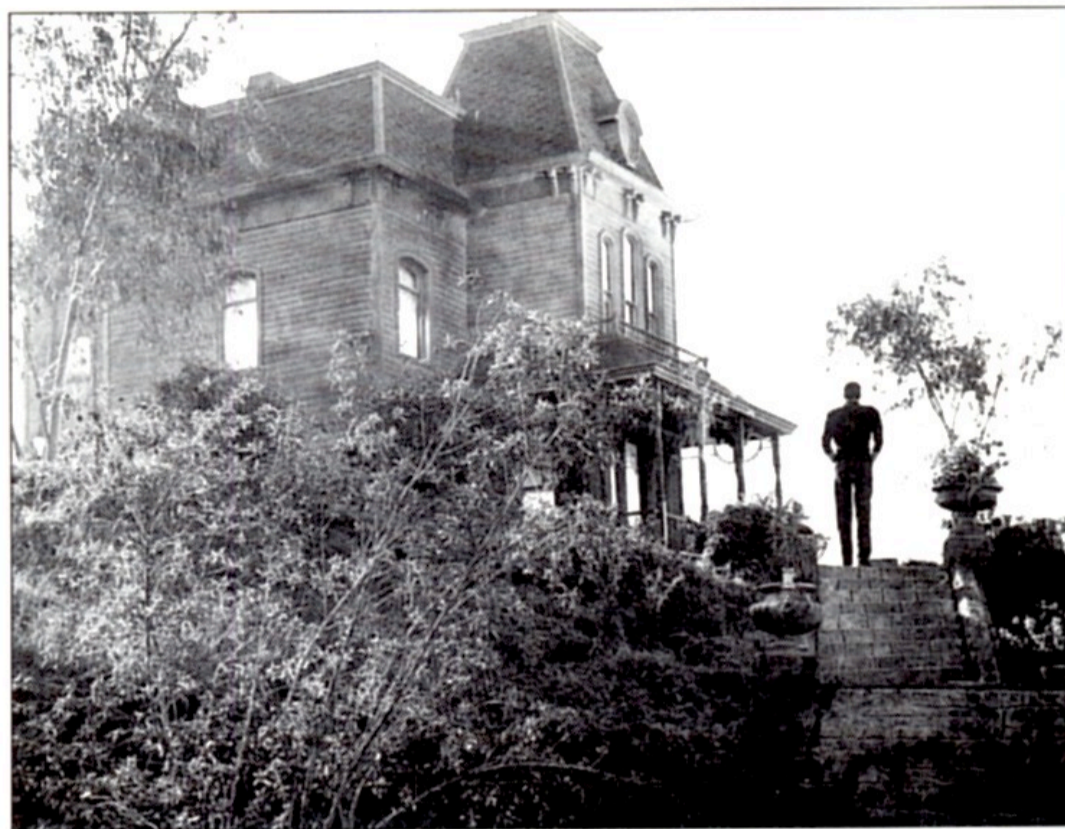
"To compose Don Quixote at the beginning of the 17th century was a reasonable, necessary and perhaps inevitable undertaking; at the beginning of the 20th century it is almost impossible. It is not in vain that 300 years have passed, charged with the most complex happenings—among them, to mention only one, that same Don Quixote."

So wrote the benighted author Pierre Menard to his friend Jorge Luis Borges, in a letter which Borges quoted in his essay, "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote." Menard's astonishing goal was to attempt a complete, word-for-word recreation of Miguel De Cervantes' novel. Although he never finished the task in his lifetime, the fragments he left behind provide an interesting contrast with the original.

Last year, a similar experiment was attempted by director Gus Van Sant, who managed to complete a scene-for-scene remake of Alfred Hitchcock's *PSYCHO*. Fortunately for the purposes of comparison, a crisp new 35mm print of the original film has been touring the art house circuit as part of the Universal Hitchcock series. Seeing the film again on the big screen is astonishing in light of Van Sant's recreation of it; unfortunately for the remake, the Hitchcock classic condemns the upstart newcomer without appeal.

"The text of Cervantes and that of Menard are verbally identical, but the second is almost infinitely richer," Borges concluded. No such conclusion arises from a reviewing of the Hitchcock and Van Sant versions of *PSYCHO*. The texts of the two films may be almost identical, but the former is in every way more surprising, mysterious, suspenseful, and ingenious.

PSYCHO auteur Gus Van Sant directs Vince Vaughn as the new Norman.



A new print of *PSYCHO* screened around the country as part of the Universal Hitchcock series, providing an ideal opportunity for comparison with the remake.

Take for example the 1960 film's highlight, the death of Marion Crane (Janet Leigh). Hitchcock audaciously sets the murder in the most unexpected of places, a shower. In a sequence that initially appears to be about cleansing and rebirth (the physical action being an externalization of the character's inner state, after she decides to atone for her theft), the ultimate, shocking irony is that it leads to a horrible, unexpected death of the lead character—a plot gambit that stunned audiences of yesterday and still manages to draw squirms and gasps from appreciative viewers at the retrospective tour.

How does Van Sant handle the death of Marion (Anne Heche)? He resorts to the hoariest of clichés, actually setting the scene in a shower! It's a location that has been used in numerous, forgettable slasher films. More memorably, Brian DePalma parodied the stereotypical shower scene in *PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE* and *BLOW OUT*; in a more serious vein, he even played off audience expectations to create suspense in a similar scene in *DRESSED TO KILL* (we knew what to expect, and he knew we knew, so it was a matter of how and when, not whether, he would deliver). Van Sant, on the other hand, plays the scene for surprise and shock, where there is none left for the audience, who are already two steps ahead of him. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that Heche's Marion is an obvious target whom we expect to see killed off. Hitchcock, by beginning the story with Marion, made her the character we expected to follow throughout the film; Van Sant, by beginning the film with Marion, telegraphs to us that she will be an inevitable victim.

Van Sant also falters structurally, after this point. In the Hitchcock film, the death of Marion forces us into identification with Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins), an apparently innocent lad who evokes audience sympathy, even as he hides the evidence that would incriminate his mother in Marion's murder.

No such identification can take place with the new Norman (Vince Vaughn), a thorough creep who is obviously guilty of the crime he is hiding. Thereafter, Hitchcock built the second half of his film on the mystery surrounding Norman's mother—who in a truly surprising twist ending turns out to be none other than Norman himself. Although hardly original (Robert Louis Stevenson had managed a similar ruse in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*), the revelation was undeniably effective.

Conversely, the latter half of Van Sant's film contains no mystery. The characters go through their obligatory paces while we wait for them to catch up to what we already know. Worse yet, Van Sant stages an unsurprising "surprise" ending in which Norman Bates is revealed to be the murderer, dressed as his own mother. The idea is so tired one can barely believe Van Sant tried to pull it off. Whereas Hitchcock made the revelation a surprise by unmasking a character imbued with traits that seemed to spell his innocence—soft-spoken, shy, nervous, devoted to his mother—Van Sant carelessly telegraphs the revelation by imbuing the character with traits that betray his guilt—soft-spoken, shy, nervous, devoted to his mother.

If Van Sant's film has any value, it is in proving that the much-vaunted technical aspects of Hitchcock's filmmaking were not necessarily the source of his greatness as an artist. Van Sant's film is in every way technically equal—or even superior—to its predecessor, with fine color cinematography, and stereo sound, not to mention an excellent Bernard Herrmann score. However, the Hitchcock film relied for its effects on originality and creativity. Van Sant's remake substitutes rote repetition and clichés that have long since lost their value. Perhaps the great condemnation of the new film is that, unlike the original, it falls lamentably short of the level of accomplishment that could inspire a remake nearly 40 years later. □

FANT-ASIA Jackie Chan, double and dubbed in "Twin Dragons"

By Craig Reid

The English-language release of *TWIN DRAGONS* (Dimension, 4/99 [1992], PG-13) is the latest Jackie Chan escapade to deck the halls with boughs of sorry. *DRAGONS* was filmed for Chinese viewers and for the benefit of the Hong Kong Director's Guild, but with Chan's skyrocketing Stateside popularity, Miramax is cashing in another one of their Chan chips. Have they forgotten why Americans make fun of kung-fu films? The worst thing about these English-dubbed versions is that they're English-dubbed versions, and this is a film you have to see in Chinese. Chan's one-liners are lost in the translation, and his English voice still lacks that proper emotional content to sell the delivery or comedic timing. Chan rarely dislikes his own films, but he was disappointed with this one, mainly because the use of "special effects" didn't impress him as much as he hoped. However, the chance to watch some of Chan's pugilistic presage on the big screen still makes the film worth the watch.

Co-directed by Hong Kong royalty Tsui Hark and Ringo Lam, the film casts Chan as identical twins separated at birth. One of them, Wang Ming (a.k.a. Boomer), is raised by a town drunk and grows up in a rough neighborhood full of gangsters, becomes an auto mechanic and loves to fight. The other, Ma Yu (a.k.a. John), is raised by his natural parents in America and becomes a world famous conductor. The action starts with Chan saving his friend Tarzan (Teddy Robin) in a barroom brawl filled with gags that grab your attention—what he does with a microphone and plate glass would make Roger Daltry's eyes pop. The ensuing boat chase literally gives Chan a haircut as the pursuing speedboat piggy backs Chan's boat missing his head by inches. John Woo, who makes a brief appearance in the film, copied the gag in *FACE/OFF*.

But of course when Chan meets Chan, the Mad Hatter couldn't have been more proud as we delve into the cross-wired, pseudo-psychic world of what happens when identical twins sense each other's feelings—and perform each other's actions long-distance. Watch for lead bad guy fighter Wang Lung Wei, Shaw Brothers most recognizable kung-fu villain. The final fight in the Mitsubishi auto-testing plant delivers the patented over-the-top action fans expect, as Chan's comedic physical timing and intelligent use of environmental space provides the audience, regardless of language, with a cornucopia of death-defying stunts and action that makes this film a harvestable product. Sadly, however, there are no out-takes at the end of the film. ●●● Craig Reid

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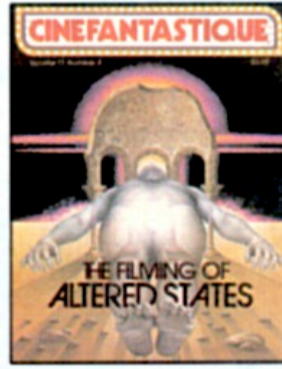
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